



The Fate of Finitude

Schelling and the Question of the World

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Preface

The present dissertation is the result of three years of study, two of them at the *Centre for Naturalism and Christian Semantics* (CNCS) at the University of Copenhagen and one as a visiting student at the *University of Chicago*. I wish therefore to acknowledge with grateful thanks the opportunity, funding and support given to me by CNCS, which have enabled me to pursue this research and produce this work.

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Frederik A. Mortensen

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1 Introduction

1.1 *The Aim and Structure of the Study*

This study concerns the human conditions for seeking an understanding of the world. The overall thesis is that human self-understanding depends on an ability to relate and orient oneself in the world, which is to say that *the human being conceives itself through the way it inhabits the world*. This thesis pertains to an understanding of religion as a way of orienting oneself in the world. Understood in this way, religion not only reflects the human disposition to seek an understanding of the world, but also reflects a way of inhabiting the world on human conditions. Thus, religious orientation reflects the semantic conditions of human life in the way self-understanding is mediated by the meaningful structures of the world.

The thesis emerges within a hermeneutic-existential framework. This framework determines the central exposition of the anthropological thought of the German philosopher F.W.J. Schelling (1775-1854) as portrayed in his notion of personhood. It is my ambition to show how this notion of personhood reflects the embeddedness of human life in the world and to make it available for a contemporary philosophical discussion of religion. This shall be done by first clarifying, with contemporary thinking, how religion can be understood as a concern with the world and how this concern binds religion to the question of human selfhood. The methodological movement of this study consists in a treatment of Schelling in light of the findings of preliminary discussion of contemporary standpoints (Nagel, McDowell and Taylor), facilitating a return to a discussion of Schelling's potential for contemporary reflections on religion (Dalferth). The guiding question of this study is *the question of the world*: 'what is the world' in its capacity of being that through which human self-understanding comes about? The guiding question is therefore an open question, one that allows for an assessment of different options for understanding the world and the self.

In Part I, I explore such options, starting with Thomas Nagel's formulation of '*the cosmic question*' in his discussion of human religiosity.¹ The discussion of possible answers to the cosmic question and its implications for the self-world relation transitions into an assessment

¹ *The cosmic question*, which I refer to as 'the question of the world', is formulated by Nagel as the question concerning *a conception of the world and one's relation to it*. Thomas Nagel, "Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament," in *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament: Essays 2002-2008* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 5.

and discussion of John McDowell's *naturalism of second nature*² and Charles Taylor's notion of *background frameworks*.³ I argue that the cosmic question cannot be sufficiently answered by ontologies such as naturalism because these undermine the status of the cosmic question as an existential concern. I argue that naturalism, as well as any other theory of the world that is ignorant of the embeddedness of the self that is revealed in the cosmic question, falls short of providing a satisfying answer. I call such an answer a *first-person cosmology*.

Against this backdrop, I initiate, in Part II, a reading of the notion of personhood within Schelling's later thought. My reading of his notion of personhood proceeds in three steps. The first step is a historical introduction to Schelling's main ideas as they derive from the tradition of post-Kantian idealism (chapter 5). The second step is a systematic reconstruction of his later ontology, an *ontology of freedom*, as it develops into a distinction between rational and historical philosophy. Against the background of Schelling's ontology of freedom, the third step develops his notion of personhood. This procedure makes evident that Schelling's way of incorporating epistemology into ontology has an anthropological turn that reflects a radical notion of human embeddedness in the world. Personhood designates the human embeddedness in being as an *ontological situation* that is determining for the formation of the world and its semantic conditions.

The central contribution of this study is the application of Schelling's notion of personhood to the problem characterizing the question of the world as it is explored in the contemporary context. This is not a comparative inquiry. The discussion of Part I serves to establish contemporary markers for the questions at issue in embeddedness. These markers are informative of Schelling's conception of the world as a limit-concept, which is ultimately indeterminable, in the form of an ultimate claim. Schelling portrays embeddedness as a radical condition of contingency. From the perspective of personhood, a modern setting can be seen that makes clear what it means that no ultimate, objective reference is given for an understanding of the world, and that all references lead back to their ground in personal being. The human being is a groundless agent who sees the world, and its own position in such a world, in a particular way that reflects its orientation in the world.

² I discuss McDowell's *naturalism of second nature* in the context of his seminal work *Mind and World*. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994).

³ Aside from a few concise papers, I refer to the exposition that Taylor gives on *background* and *framework* (these two words are interchangeable) in the systematic part of *Sources of the Self*. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

Understood in this way, Schelling's notion of personhood provides a basis for understanding the intersection of religion and selfhood in religious orientation. In order to explore this, I consult, in Part III, the notion of religion provided by the German philosopher of religion Ingolf Dalferth.⁴ In religion, orientation is established by interpretations of living in the world by means of orders that enable a localization of the human being. Against the background of Dalferth's notion of orientation, the final discussion seeks to unfold the potentials of Schelling's notion of personhood in the context of Dalferth's philosophy of religion. In this regard, I seek to demonstrate how religion discloses an understanding of what it means to pursue a meaningful life in accordance with the conditions of human embeddedness in a contingent world. In particular, I seek to demonstrate that this remains the case in Dalferth's notion of *absolute orientation*.

The conclusions that follow from this study are structured by four interrelated claims:

1. Religion is concerned with the world from a state of engagement and embeddedness of human life in the world.
2. The embeddedness of human life in the world binds the question of the world to an understanding of subjectivity and the self.
3. Schelling's notion of *personhood* provides a theory of the embeddedness of human life in the world that reflects the semantic conditions of world-orientation.
4. From the perspective that religion reflects world-inhabitation as a matter of world-orientation, Schelling's notion of personhood can be understood as *absolute orientation*.

1.2 Religion and Selfhood

The problem addressed in this study pertains to a question. In its preliminary version, this question is *the question concerning the world*. As a question of the world, the question reaches out for an understanding of the totality of 'all there is.' For example, the question could read 'What is the world?' or 'What is the constitution or nature of the world?' The meaning of the term 'world' is not univocal. Different strands of thinking claim a correct understanding of this term on the grounds of ontological theories about the nature of 'all there is.' This is no doubt because many things hinge on the question of the world, e.g. we could say that the notion of the world determines what we understand as real and, as real, as something that belongs to the world. Hence, in many respects, the question

⁴ I discuss Dalferth's notion of religion and absolute orientation in the context of his systematic work *Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*. Ingolf Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen: hermeneutische Religionsphilosophie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

of the world determines the reality in which we live. The question of the world can also be approached on different levels. For example, on one level, the world could denote the complete sum of the inventory, entities, and phenomena in the world; or it could apply to the coherence of all existing things (relations included); or the concept could be understood as the totality of the real and the possible as a horizon of possibility. Furthermore, the question of the world, in whatever way it is approached, also determines our understanding of ourselves as human beings that are part of the world. Hence, the question of the world, for human beings, is a question concerning that of which they are a part. The way we determine the world determines our understanding of ourselves.

The question of the world is formulated by Thomas Nagel as a human disposition to seek *a conception of the world and one's relation to it*.⁵ This is, according to Nagel, an initially religious disposition that characterizes human nature. Nagel calls the question *the cosmic question*. In Nagel's view, religious orientation reflects the human inclination toward the cosmic question. But how can religion be understood as a question concerning the world? *How is religion concerned with the world?* If we follow Nagel, it seems clear that the relational aspect of the question ('one's relation to the world') is determinative of the question, not to mention the world in question. The world is determined as something with which the human being is (already) standing in a relation. The question of the world as a matter of religion therefore marks a relation and the attempt to come to terms with this relation.

The question of the world is a central question to philosophy. Despite the long history of humankind, this question, which has occupied thinkers of all times, is still pressing. Many answers to the question are reflected in the history of philosophy. Furthermore, the way the question of the world has been asked marks differences in the history of philosophy. For example, it marks a fundamental shift of focus between ancient metaphysics and modern philosophy. Ancient metaphysics was concerned with the question as a question of *being* (ontology), while modern philosophy, by and large, has been concerned with the question as a question about our *access to being* (epistemology). In this sense, epistemology can be said to have replaced ontology as the *prima philosophia*. As a consequence of this shift, the world turns into 'the external world' – external to the human mind.⁶ At least since Descartes' groundbreaking contribution to this shift, philosophy has been preoccupied with human *consciousness* and old questions concerning the human *self*. With regard to the question of the world, the

⁵ Nagel, "Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament," 5.

⁶ Charles Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 4.

self has often been seen as ‘something’ that is conscious of the world and therefore both sets itself apart from the world and at the same time relates to the world. Therefore, as a philosophical concept, selfhood frames the idea of a world-relation.

Throughout the history of philosophy, and even as early as Plato, the question of the world has also been carried out as a matter of human religiosity and a deeply felt yearning for reconciliation with the universe. Nagel calls this yearning *the religious temper* of the human being, which primarily reflects a *desire* for a proper world-relation. This further reflects a notion of religion as a concern with *the problem* of relating to the world. This provides a possible explanation for why religions tend to conflict with other ways of posing or responding to the question of the world, for example ways that deny or seek to eliminate its character as a problem.⁷

Another widespread way of thinking about the world in our time is to think the world *without* a world-relation; that is, to think the world as an enclosed entity, grounding the reality of ‘*all there is*.’ As Stanley Cavell puts it: “looking at the world as if it was another object.”⁸ This is an attempt to think the world as world *tout court*. As a sort of *immanentist thinking*, this approach is characterized by reductions of fundamental convictions such as those underlying the notion of *selfhood* or *religious convictions*. By its own standards, the question of the world becomes easier to answer and the answer becomes more accurate.

However, one of the problems with dismissing the idea that the world is part of a world-relation is how one is to go about explaining the question that one claims to answer; furthermore, it becomes difficult to understand why the question of the world is asked. This problem reflects a fundamental tie between the question of the world and the world-relation of the self from which it could be said to derive. Hence, by not including the world-relation in the conception of the world (thinking the world from

⁷ Nagel’s characterization of religion as a matter of relating to the world, derived primarily from Plato, gives expression to one of the etymological meanings of the word ‘*religio*’, from *re-ligare* (*ligare*), which means ‘to bind,’ or ‘to re-attach’ something that has been separated or detached. See Carl H. Ratschow, “Religion II. Antike Und Alte Kirche,” ed. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel, *Historisches Wörterbuch Der Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe, 2007 1976). In this study, religion is treated with regard to the philosophical aspects and problems related to *religion as a way of living one’s life*, as opposed to a theological or apologetic approach. As explored in discussion with Dalferth (Part III), religion is understood as a *life-orientation* that reflects how the question of the world is a question of religion. This approach places religion (any form of religion) on par with non- or anti-religious possibilities of orientation, essentially as a concern of human selfhood.

⁸ Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1979), 236.

within a world-relation), any answer to the question of the world becomes insufficient, incomplete, and ultimately fails to cover ‘all there is.’

What I call immanentist thinking can be characterized as a reductive or restrictive rationality. For example, the widespread conviction that reality squares with naturalistic explanations. Naturalistic thinking, in its different varieties, refers to reality or the world as an (theoretically) intelligible totality, which is often simply called *nature*.⁹ Naturalistic thinking, in this broad sense, defends an understanding of the world that allegedly is fully describable by the natural laws etc. as described by the natural sciences.

Naturalisms tend to be closed off to concepts such as the ‘self.’¹⁰ The naturalistic ways of determining the world tend to eliminate contrasting features such as those underlying the notion of the self (mind-body) or those expressed in religious forms of orientation (body-soul). In particular, one could argue that the means of precise explanation seeks to narrow the distinctions and categories of reality in order to enable clear and precise explanations. In a great deal of naturalistic thinking, the world, as ‘nature’, marks a claim that there is only one ontological realm; that all contrasts are contrasts within nature, and not borderlines of it.¹¹ In other words, nothing is so extraordinary or so artificial that it cannot be explained by the laws of nature.

This is a view of the world as the world is understood to be *in itself*. When the scientific image of the world is said to be influential, this is because naturalistic thinking has made its way into common understanding to such a degree that we often develop and employ understandings that exclude any individual or subjective perspectives of the world. Nagel has once called this the centerless view of the world, and contends that this view leaves no room for the viewer:

The conception of the world that seems to leave no room for me is a familiar one that people carry around with them most of the time. It is a conception of the world as simply existing, seen from no particular perspective, no privileged point of view – as simply there, and hence apprehensible from various points of view.¹²

⁹ See Hans Fink, “Three Sorts of Naturalism,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 2 (August 1, 2006): 202-221.

¹⁰ See Stewart Goetz and Charles Taliaferro, *Naturalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub., 2008).

¹¹ Naturalism, as a theory of nature, is only one type of emphasis among different varieties of naturalism. It can be called *ontological naturalism* and should be distinguished from e.g. a *methodological naturalism*. See Owen Flanagan, “Varieties of Naturalism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science*, ed. Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 430-452.

¹² Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 56.

A world like this leaves the human being ‘nowhere.’ We must ask whether we can ultimately do without the contrasting features that underly the impressions we make of ourselves. Is there no basis for taking a stance against the downgrading of a reality that reflects one’s individual impressions and self-conception and does not reduce “the manifest image of man-in-the-world” to “the scientific image of man,” to borrow the words of Wilfred Sellars?¹³ Is the world of science at all a human world, a world for humans to live and orientate themselves in? Many modern thinkers have raised these questions. For example, the German philosopher Wolfgang Janke claims that the essential problem lies in the ambition of precision. Janke calls this view of the world *praecisio mundi*.

In *Critique of the World that has been made Precise* (1999), Janke proposes a diagnosis of what is commonly called *the modern world-alienation*.¹⁴ His analysis is concerned with the history of physics and metaphysics as a historical process of increasing the precision of the world (*Weltpräzision*). The aim is an understanding of the categorical changes that underpin the existential crisis provided by the positivistic cardinal thesis: “Everything that can be made precise is real, everything real can be made precise.”¹⁵

We live in a world that has been made precise; in this world only what can be precisely calculated, presented, measured and made available counts as real. This is also the case when it comes to language. The expression “Express yourself precisely!” asks for a concise and precise formulation of the vague, inaccurate, indefinite, rambling and ambiguous speech. [...] The demand to determine everything there is, to contract it concisely to the essential, to formulate it definitively and univocal, demands at the same time to put aside everything unessential and *to cut off as superfluous* or even as meaningless that which does not comply with the postulate of the precise.¹⁶

¹³ Wilfrid Sellars, “Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man,” in *In the Space of Reasons: Selected Essays of Wilfrid Sellars* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 369–408.

¹⁴ Wolfgang Janke, *Kritik der präzisierten Welt* (Freiburg: Verlag K. Alber, 1999). See also “Praecisio Mundi: Über die Abschnitte der mythisch-numinosen Welt im Schatten der Götzendämmerung,” in *Mythos und Religion: interdisziplinäre Aspekte*, ed. Oswald Bayer (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1990), 31–57; Wolfgang Janke, *Plato: antike Theologien des Staunens* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2007).

¹⁵ “Eine Kritik der präzisierten Welt geht von der Generalthese des positivistischen Zeitalters aus: Alles, was präzisierbar ist, ist wirklich, und alles Wirkliche ist präzisierbar.” Janke, *Kritik der präzisierten Welt*, 263. On translations: If nothing else is mentioned, all translations of non-English material are my own. When I find it necessary or helpful, I include the original quotations in the footnotes.

¹⁶ “Wir leben in einer präzisierten Welt; in ihr wird nur noch das als wirklich gegeben zugelassen, was präzise berechnet, hergestellt, abgemessen, verfügbar gemacht werden kann. Das gilt auch für die Sprache. Die Wendung »Drücke dich präzise aus!«

Janke refers to the Latin root of *praecisio*: *prae-cidere*, which means ‘to cut off at the front’, e.g. a tongue, a hand, a head or the genitals. He then traces symptoms of the development of ‘amputations’ of the human world-relation in the history of physics and metaphysics, right up to our modern era. In his opinion, this has led to a crisis where “the precise calculated and exposed world is alienated, disenchanted, godless, lifeworld-oblivious, abandoned of being, so that the modern human being no longer feels by itself and at home in it.”¹⁷ The central aim, however, is not to fight world-precision as such, but to criticise *the demand for an exclusive right to truth claims about the real*. The point is to show how the categorical positing of *praecisio mundi* gets in the way of a natural human attempt to fit into the world and find oneself at home in the world. Janke therefore claims a need for a world-construal in accordance with human existence, one that can restore the separation of ontological and existential categories.

This critique of precision aims at certain tenets, such as the contemporary critique of ‘folk psychology’ proposed by neurophilosopher Paul Churchland. Churchland’s basic assumption is that the natural ways we think and ‘theorise’ about our human cognitive capacities are mistaken. Neuroscience, on the other hand, gets it right (or approximately so). ‘Folk psychology’, according to Churchland,

is a framework of concepts, roughly adequate to the demands of everyday life, with which the humble adept comprehends, explains, predicts, and manipulates a certain domain of phenomena. It is, in short, a folk *theory*... Call this the *theoretical view* of our self understanding.¹⁸

In Churchland’s opinion, explanations offered by neuroscience have been tested and improved to an extent that confirms their superiority through scientific verification.

fordert dazu auf, eine vage, ungenaue, unbestimmte, weitschweifige, vieldeutige Redeweise knapp und genau auf den Punkt zu bringen... Die Forderung, jegliches, was ist, exakt festzulegen, bundig auf das Wesentliche zusammenzuziehen, es definitiv und eindeutig zur Sprache zu bringen, erfordert zugleich, alles als Unwesentliches beiseite zu lassen und als überflüssiges oder gar Sinnloses abzuschneiden, was sich nicht dem Postulat des Präzisen fugt.” Ibid., 12. My italics.

¹⁷ “Und gibt es nicht Symptome genug, die anzeigen, in welchem Ausmaße die präzise verrechnete und verfügbar gemachte Welt entfremdet, entzaubert, entgöttert, lebensweltvergessen und seinsverlassen ist, so daß sich der moderne Mensch in ihr nicht mehr bei sich selbst und zu Hause fühlt?” Ibid., 13.

¹⁸ Paul Churchland, “Folk Psychology and the Explanation of Human Behavior,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 3 (1989): 209. Also, “Our self understanding, I continue to maintain, is no different in character from our understanding of any other empirical domain. It is speculative, systematic, corrigible, and in principle replaceable.” Churchland, “Folk Psychology and the Explanation of Human Behavior,” 210.

The problem with Churchland's critique is whether a natural (pre-scientific) human self-understanding is adequately characterized as *theoretical*, and whether there is a normative basis for claiming that it is better to replace them with the insights of the empirical sciences. This is exactly the kind of idea that Janke objects to. First of all, the objection concerns the characterization of the initial self-understanding as theoretical and as a mistaken or insufficient theory. Secondly, the objection concerns the assumption that only *one* true way of conceiving (and relating to) the world is required (the theoretical).

From these examples (even though they mark two opposing extremes) we can suspect that the principles of naturalistic thinking are in dissonance with the question of the world *as a question*. This is a dissonance between the way the question of the world is answered by the sum total of scientific assumptions and the very reason why the question of the world was asked – at all. Despite the fact that the natural sciences have, as an ultimate goal, to unearth the nature of 'all there is,' it seems that the question of the world becomes untenable on a scientific basis. So long as naturalistic thinking about the world cannot integrate the human disposition to ask the question of the world this conflict will remain. Hence, the question of the world requires us to bring these two ends together.

1.3 The World-inhabitor

In order to establish an argument that the question of the world is tied to a world-relation from which it must be answered, I critically engage this situation within an exploration of 'the cosmic question' (chapter 2). At first, Nagel's underlying notion of the 'religious temper' and its compatibility with a naturalistic framework is discussed through a strand of thinking characterized as *Religious Naturalism* (chapter 3.1, 3.2). Given that naturalism takes various forms in contemporary thinking, I examine the more specific possibility of answering the cosmic question by means of McDowell's so-called *Liberal Naturalism* (chapter 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6). Both of these discussions prove unsatisfactory to the extent that neither provides a way of relating to a naturalistic world that complies with the premise of the cosmic question. However, through a discussion of these different ways of employing a naturalistic framework, the discussion is able to proceed with a clearer notion as to why selfhood is essential to the question of the world as a matter of understanding the underlying world-relation itself: the self is always already engaged with the world, always already placed in the world. This factor of embeddedness in the world constitutes an awareness of the self as a need for orientation.

In Nagel's approach to the cosmic question, the question of the world-relation is already built into his model (as a notion of human subjectivity and world-embeddedness). Nagel's concern with the question is therefore

limited to the extent that it squares with a specific notion of subjectivity. However, Nagel's model of subjectivity entails an inconsistency between the embeddedness that is claimed and the world that Nagel has in mind, an 'outer world.' Hence, the question of the nature of world-embeddedness moves to the fore. I deal with this question in a discussion I take up with Charles Taylor's notion of background frameworks (chapter 4). With Taylor's notion of selfhood, the notion of embeddedness reflects back on the question of the world *as a question*. Using Taylor's model (a model of engaged selfhood), the question of the world is transformed from seeking a world that lies before us (an outer world) to articulating the background against which the world as we understand it or experience it on a phenomenological basis makes sense. Thus, from the perspective of the underlying status of selfhood, the question of the world becomes intertwined with the question of meaning.

Part I is not simply meant to show that naturalistic thinking is bound to principles that cannot provide sufficient conditions for human self-understanding. It also aims at showing why. The decisive point is how self-understanding comes about, considering *that* it is required. The ability to think the world as world depends on a fundamentally different setting, one that brings the very need for self-understanding into view. This is the recognition *that there is a setting* that underlies the question of the world. We could call this setting the setting of world-embeddedness, or, as I propose, we could call it *the setting of a first-person cosmology*. What I mean by first-person cosmology is that the self (that is embedded in the world) is a human person that inhabits the world on the basis of the fact that it is a part of the world.

This, in turn, reflects the problem as a metaphysical problem. We can understand metaphysics as theories of 'all there is' that seek to explain how everything pertains to an order of totality. Metaphysical thinking has a long history of attempting to deploy principles for understanding the world. The motivation for metaphysical thinking can therefore be understood as the ambition to think the world in the 'proper' way, that is, to think the world as world. This is one of the central questions that guided the thinking of F.W.J. Schelling. Schelling contributes to an understanding of what metaphysical thinking is all about even 'after metaphysics.' The problems raised in this study can therefore be illuminated by Schelling's fundamental reflections on metaphysical thinking.

If metaphysics can rightfully be understood as an ambition to formulate a theory of the world as 'all there is,' then the attempt to grasp this totality can be understood as an attempt to think the world as world. In so doing, that is, in *thinking* the world at all, we are first referred to the capacities of thinking and to a thinking subject. We are referred to someone who attempts to get a hold of and relate him- or herself to the world as world.

However, there are precautions that need to be taken. If we take the question to be a matter of the world, and the world alone, then we might get the setting wrong. Decisively, we might miss that there is a setting and that there necessarily always will be a setting for any attempt to think the world as world. The least we can say is that the setting consists of the world as something that is thought.

First, it could be said that the project of thinking the world as world involves the things or the content of the world. We cannot think the world without its inventory. On the other hand, there is no possible way of proposing a notion of the content of the world without at the same time having delineated a notion of the world of which they are a part. A theory of the world always outlines the order according to which phenomena are placed in the world as a part of that world. A theory of the world always determines possible content of that world; it ultimately defines the totality of possible phenomena of the world. The order of the world is therefore the arrangement of the relations of the possible phenomena of the world.

However, *thinking* about the world is an enterprise that is not necessarily in view, and the setting is therefore easily left out of consideration. Thinking can be blind to its own attempt to *think* the world. At least that is the case if the view of the world itself is not considered. In such cases, one's view of the world is left *out of sight*, making the attempt to think 'all there is' incomplete, insofar as such a view of the world loses the viewer, loses itself.

The assumption of the purity and independence of the world is a view of the world *without* a viewer. We are then struck by an inconsistency: any such thing as an independent object (however imagined) cannot be accessed or 'brought into view.' It is neither thinkable nor what is being thought in the attempt *to think* the world as world. The world as a pure, untouchable and unthinkable object would not be the world as world, or even available to thought. The world is therefore never in view *as world*, but only as determinate things provided by the presupposition of the world.

The ambition to think the world as world is an attempt to think a world through the determinate things that one has in view. We are granted this view by a world we can never explicate or determine. As 'all there is' that world is an '*unprethinkable*' being (Schelling's designation) that grants this access. It is an origin of everything we have in view that, as origin, can never be determined. This remains the case to the extent that it requires determination to determine it, and the origin of determinate things is not itself determinate. It is indeterminable. This is what it means to approach the question of the world from within a world-relation. This position in the world, however, is still of fundamental concern. One has the world as one's world. Schelling states very clearly that the world is always already there. Our inevitable position in the world is the way we *inhabit the world*. This

is what we seek to come to terms with when we ask for the world and seek to locate ourselves in the world. However, our position in the world lays a claim on the attempt to think the world as a determinate world. Our conditions for thinking of this world as ‘all there is’ are never available to us in our embeddedness in the world.

In his later works, Schelling develops an ontology that reflects this problem, and he comes to recognize the radical character of this situation. According to this ontological situation, he develops an interesting notion of the embedded human being: *personhood*.¹⁹ The person is a finite being. Schelling presents, through the determination of the human being as a finite being, a way in which to understand human embeddedness in the world. The later Schelling’s ontological thinking serves to illuminate these conditions.

In Part II, I turn to the question of how Schelling’s notion of personhood characterizes the question of the world, and what human embeddedness means according to his philosophy. I do not develop a historical reading of Schelling or of his individual works, but an interpretation focused on his anthropological thought from the perspective of his notion of personhood.²⁰

The first step is a historical introduction of the main ideas in Schelling’s post-Kantian program (chapter 5). The second step is a reconstruction of his later ontology, an *ontology of freedom*, as it develops into a distinction between rational and historical philosophy.²¹ This reconstruction, which I

¹⁹ Schelling mostly uses the words ‘*Person*’ and ‘*Persönlichkeit*’, and does so interchangeably. Even though personality could be a more accurate translation of *Persönlichkeit*, I take *personhood* to cover all meanings. Today, personality would more likely refer to specific characteristics, attitudes or tempers. What Schelling describes includes this, but is also far more than that. Personhood is an ontological structure developed within Schelling’s middle period and, in this respect, determines the *ontonomous character* of the human being, that is, how the question of being determines human existence.

²⁰ I intentionally leave aside many parts and topics that are normally at issue in many interpretations of Schelling, e.g. the question of system, nature, theodicy. More could be mentioned. This is not to say that these are not important issues in Schelling’s works. I seek to navigate, with sensitivity to the larger topics and concepts, with a rather specific aim. This aim is anthropological and it is determined (admittedly) by the ambition to make Schelling available for a discussion with contemporary thinking. This is my reason for seeking out the topics that I do.

²¹ My reading of Schelling’s notion of personhood seeks to understand its central formulation in the middle period against the background of the ontological framework of his later period. I draw these distinctions from Michael Theunissen’s thesis of three distinct approaches in Schelling: an *egological* approach, which he assigns to Schelling’s early thinking; an *anthropological* approach, which he assigns to his middle period (*Freiheitsschrift* and the fragments of *Ages of the World*); and finally an *onto-theological* approach, which he assigns to Schelling’s later thinking. I thereby tie the two later periods closely together and refer to them as the ‘mature’ or simply ‘later’

take to be in line with the seminal reading of Walter Schulz,²² starts from a presentation of Schelling's later development of two concepts of being (one logical and one historical) that pertain to his distinction of negative and positive philosophy as presented in the introductions to his later works *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation* (chapter 6). From these texts, I approach Schelling's ontology of predication as delineated by Wolfram Högbe.²³ This theory of predication is important because Schelling, in turning to freedom as "the one and all of philosophy,"²⁴ becomes able to break out of a logical concept of being as determinacy. This change (a shift of primacy from *essence* to *existence*) leads to a concept of being that is characterized as historical and contingent. I approach Schelling's development of this concept of being in his notion of 'unprethinkable being' and discuss it in line with Markus Gabriel.²⁵

Against this background of the ontology of freedom, I initiate an interpretation of Schelling's notion of *personhood* (chapter 7). I engage with different textual expressions of personhood, primarily from his middle period, represented by his *Freiheitsschrift* (1809), *Stuttgart Private Lectures* (1810) and the fragments of *Ages of the World* (1811-).²⁶ In order to show Schelling's reflections on human embeddedness in his notion of personhood, I draw a path through several interrelated and intertwined characteristics of Schelling's anthropological thinking that show how personhood embodies the conditions of human existence in terms of

thinking. What I refer to as Schelling's *ontology of freedom* is supposed to cover this tie. In this regard, I follow Markus Gabriel's recent delineation of Schelling's late ontology of freedom. Markus Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology: Essays in German Idealism* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 60–101.

²² Walter Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, 2nd ed. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1975).

²³ Wolfram Högbe, *Prädikation und Genesis: Metaphysik als Fundamentalheuristik im Ausgang von Schellings "Die Weltalter"* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989), 40–78.

²⁴ F.W.J. Schelling, *Philosophical Investigations Into the Essence of Human Freedom*, trans. Jeff Love and Johannes Schmidt (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 22. All translations of untranslated texts of Schelling are from the German text of Schelling's collected works. F.W.J. Schelling, *Sämmtliche Werke*, ed. K.F.A. Schelling, I. Abteilung Vols. 1-10, II. Abteilung Vols. 1-4 (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta, 1856). This edition (SW) is quoted throughout with reference to volume (I-XIV) and page number. If nothing else is noted translations are my own.

²⁵ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*; Markus Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos: Untersuchungen über Ontotheologie, Anthropologie und Selbstbewusstseinsgeschichte in Schellings "Philosophie der Mythologie"* (De Gruyter, 2006).

²⁶ My interpretation of Schelling's notion of personhood primarily draws on recent scholarship on various facets of personhood in Schelling's thought. I should mention Dieter Sturma, Thomas Buchheim, Oliver Florig, Temilo Zantwijk. My interpretation is guided by my discussion with these interpreters.

finitude, fallibility, heteronomy, self-formation and what I call *world-inhabitation*. In these different aspects Schelling depicts how the human being, as a finite and heteronomous being, becomes the living and formative conditions of the world that it inhabits. Through these aspects, personhood is understood as the groundless ground of human world-inhabitation.

It is a central ambition of this study to illuminate how religion can be understood to engage with the question of the world. I claim that Schelling's notion of personhood provides a basis for exploring religious self-understanding as interpretations of the human world-embeddedness and the attempt to orientate oneself within the world that one inhabits. I do this, in part, by presenting a formalization of Schelling's ontological thinking that has been offered by Markus Gabriel in terms of a *domain-ontology*.²⁷ I draw on this formalization of Schelling's thought in my attempt to appropriate Schelling's thinking in the discussion on religion, as illuminative of religious orientation. To this end, I consult Ingolf Dalferth's philosophy of religious orientation (chapter 8).

Dalferth's approach to *religion as orientation* takes religion to be a matter of life-orientation and, as such, an inherent part of human life in a contingent world. Life is life in the world, and life therefore pertains to the task of world-orientation. Orientation in life is orientation in the world that one inhabits; or, to put it differently, orientation characterizes how one inhabits the world. Dalferth's central point is that religion (as a form of life-orientation) provides a way in which to relate to the inconceivable; that is, religion conserves the inconceivable without making it conceivable.²⁸ Religious articulations of these conditions by various systems of symbols provide cognitive and emotional structures for living with the uncontrollable in the controllable.

The final discussion (chapter 9) seeks to appropriate Schelling's notion of personhood in relation to Dalferth's notion of *absolute orientation*. The human being, if we follow Dalferth, finds in religion an absolute aspect of heteronomy that *positively* determines human self-understanding. Absolute orientation becomes the comportment of the individual to the absolute

²⁷ See Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 119–138.

²⁸ "Auf verschiedene Weise versuchen Religionen, die Bereiche des Unbestimmbaren, Unzugänglichen, Chaotischen, Sinnlosen, Unverfügbaren, Unfaßbaren und nicht Kontrollierbaren an die Bereiche vernünftig bestimmter Ordnungen und sinnvoll verstehbarer Strukturen zurückzubinden, sie also als das Andere und als die für sich und als solche nicht faßbare Rückseite des Sinnvollen, Verfügbaren und Kontrollierbaren zu thematisieren." Ingolf Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," in *Orientierung: philosophische Perspektiven*, ed. Werner Stegmaier (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 251.

heteronomy of facticity that in turn becomes determining of oneself and one's relation to everyone else. Self-determination is somehow forfeited insofar as the self gives itself over to its heteronomous condition by interpreting its finitude in the horizon of the unconditioned.

PART I

The World in Question

2 The Cosmic Question

2.1 Nagel and the Religious Temper

In “Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temper”, the American philosopher Thomas Nagel presents a notion of religiosity characterized as a temperament, that is, *a religious temper*.²⁹ This temper manifests itself in a human yearning to reconcile and understand oneself in coherence with the universal whole. Nagel calls the religious temper “a disposition to seek a view of the world that can play a certain role in the inner life – a role that for some people is occupied by religion.”³⁰ In this view, human religiosity is a natural attempt to incorporate a conception of the universe into a conception of oneself and one’s life. Hence, the ‘religious temper’ is *the disposition to ask the cosmic question*.

The connection between a conception of the universe and the human self-conception that Nagel points to is expressed in the human urge to seek orientation and an understanding of oneself in form of a ‘cosmic question’. The basic assumption is that one’s self-understanding cannot be achieved from one’s own perspective (or within one’s finite perspective) but depends on an external point of view. This external point of view is traditionally provided by religious answers, e.g. in the form of a transcendent divine power. As Nagel argues, such an external view is also required on a secular basis.

In a secular age traditional religious answers have become invalid, so Nagel says. However, despite the erosion of traditional answers, the cosmic question continues to be asked. Nagel’s secular take consists in reinterpreting, and thereby qualifying, human religiosity while disqualifying traditional religious answers. Nagel sets out to find such an answer, a secular answer, to human religiosity.

Whatever form this answer might take, it provides a perspective on oneself and one’s life, enabling orientation and self-understanding. This suggests that the cosmic question, in its deeper sense, is a question *about* oneself. This is how Nagel sees it: there is the point of view that I occupy – the internal point of view, and the point of view through which I understand myself – the external point of view. Nagel fails to comment

²⁹ Nagel, “Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament.”

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

directly on the interrelation of these perspectives in his essay, but it becomes clear that *self-understanding requires an external point of view*. To understand oneself requires the distance provided by a so-called external perspective. In other words, the cosmic question is *a way of pursuing a greater perspective in one's life that provides a proper self-understanding*. The cosmic question is thus a direct matter of seeing oneself and one's life from an external point of view.

Nagel's background for distinguishing between an internal and an external point of view derives from the conception of an irreducible first-person perspective. Since his essay *What Is It Like To Be A Bat?* (1974), Nagel has played a central role in the re-examination of the question of the subjective character of experience within philosophy of mind.³¹ He presents a critique of a variety of reductionist takes on consciousness and subjectivity in modern analytical thinking. However, in his seminal work, *The View From Nowhere* (1986), Nagel discusses his theory of subjectivity more fully.³² He presents his philosophy as a theory of perspectives and as an examination of the possibility of relating and unifying different perspectives, in particular what he calls a *subjective* and an *objective* perspective.

How to combine the perspective of a particular person inside the world with an objective view of that same world, the person and his viewpoint included. It is a problem that faces every creature with the impulse and the capacity to transcend its particular point of view and to conceive of the world as a whole.³³

As Nagel sees it, the task of bringing different perspectives together is not always possible. Where perspectives can be combined, we must endeavor to see how this is possible, and where the perspectives cannot be combined, the task is to acquire a sense of reality that can deal with the particular

³¹ Thomas Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 165-180. The famous example of Nagel's argument is a bat's experiences as something, which provides a bat with a unique experience of what it is like to be a bat. Hence, consciousness is equipped with a unique and therefore irreducible point of view. "It is impossible to exclude the phenomenological features of experience from a reduction in the same way that one excludes the phenomenal features of an ordinary substance from a physical or chemical reduction of it – namely, by explaining them as effects on the minds of human observers. If physicalism is to be defended, the phenomenological features must themselves be given a physical account. But when we examine their subjective character it seems that such a result is impossible. The reason is that every subjective phenomenon is essentially connected with a single point of view, and it seems inevitable that an objective, physical theory will abandon that point of view." Nagel, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?," 167.

³² Nagel, *The View From Nowhere*.

³³ *Ibid.*, 3.

conflicts without thinking that one of them must be abandoned in favor of the other. Nagel stresses that an objective view of the world, from 'nowhere in particular', enables us to form a broader conception of our place in the world for the benefit of our possibilities and development. The subjective view of the world is the perspective that is from one's own particular point of view³⁴ and enables one to understand certain aspects of the world which simply cannot be understood from any other perspective, as well as aspects that give value and meaning to one's particular life.³⁵

Nagel also characterizes the distinction between the internal and the external perspective as polar, which means that the poles are relative to each other and therefore a matter of degree.³⁶ In Nagel's formulation of the external perspective, we find the idea of an objectivity that stands opposed to the subjective character of the internal, personal perspective (an unreachable ideal). Nagel depicts the ideal of objectivity in the following way.

The attempt is made to view the world not from a place within it, or from the vantage point of a special type of life and awareness, but from nowhere in particular and no

³⁴ "I am Thomas Nagel" is a recurring example. See, for example, the discussion on 'the objective self' Ibid., 54–66.

³⁵ Dieter Henrich has provided an informative critique of Nagel's theory of subjectivity. Dieter Henrich, "Dimensionen und Defizite einer Theorie der Subjectivität", no. 36, *Philosophische Rundschau* (1989): 1-24. Among other things, Henrich points out an inconsistency in the theory of subjectivity as formulated through a grammatical 'I' (first-person), an inconsistency between the various topics within which Nagel identifies the subjective and the objective aspects. Furthermore, Henrich points out that Nagel never sufficiently provides a final consistent ground for the question of reality, which makes the theory in itself torn between various philosophical topics in which different criteria are worked out, e.g. between the ethical and theoretical chapters. Henrich is clearly more impressed by the theoretical part than by the discussions of practical philosophy. However, Henrich's appraisal finds too much being presupposed and ultimately not integrated into the fundamental consideration of subjectivity. As Henrich puts it, "Die Rechtfertigung der subjektiven Dimension im Weltverhältnis geschieht so, daß diese Dimension als solche von der Analyse gerade nicht erreicht wird." Henrich, "Dimensionen und Defizite einer Theorie der Subjectivität," 23.

³⁶ "At one end is the point of view of a particular individual, having a specific constitution, situation, and relation to the rest of the world. From here the direction of movement toward greater objectivity involves, first, abstraction from the individual's specific spatial, temporal, and personal position in the world, then from the features that distinguish him from other humans, then gradually from the forms of perception and action characteristic of humans, and away from the narrow range of a human scale in space, time, and quantity, toward a conception of the world which as far as possible is not the view from anywhere within it. There is probably no end-point to this process, but its aim is to regard the world as centerless, with the viewer as just one of its contents." Thomas Nagel, "Subjective and Objective," in *Mortal Questions* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 206.

form of life in particular at all. The object is to discount for the features of our pre-reflective outlook that make things appear to us as they do, and thereby to reach an understanding of things as they really are. We flee the subjective under the pressure of an assumption that everything must be something not to any point of view, but in itself. To grasp this by detaching more and more from our own point of view is the unreachable ideal at which the pursuit of objectivity aims.³⁷

The ideal of objectivity contains the idea that one's own viewpoint is distorted by contingencies such as one's particular situation and therefore needs to be corrected. It is the idea of the world *as it really is* without an observer and the distortions that derive from a point of view. From the belief in a fixed reality beyond a particular point of view, it follows that the conditions of particularity need to be scrutinized.³⁸ Objectivity can be reached through two sorts of abstractions, or, as Nagel calls it, two sorts of transcendence: first, a transcendence of particularity, and secondly, a transcendence of one's type. In principle, complete detachment is able to give the world as it really is and thereby escape the distortions implied when the world is *for* someone particular.

Nagel however does not approve of a complete priority of objectivity over subjectivity. Insofar as certain subjective facts and values that seem indispensable to human living are omitted in the advancement towards objectivity, Nagel proposes combining the perspectives.³⁹ This is not a claim that objectivity is false, but partial. By omitting phenomena available only to a first-person perspective such as the subjective character of experiences (what it is like to be me), the world becomes incomplete. Both aspects are needed.

Nagel describes the ideal combination of the two perspectives as a unified conception of life and the world, which amounts to a 'worldview.'⁴⁰ Nagel leaves the ambition to provide a complete worldview aside and sets out to investigate the complications contained in the task of establishing a

³⁷ Ibid., 208.

³⁸ "If there is a way things really are, which explains their diverse appearances to differently constituted and situated observers, then it is most accurately apprehended by methods not specific to particular types of observers... Objectivity requires not only a departure from one's individual viewpoint, but also, so far as possible, departure from a specifically human or even mammalian viewpoint. The idea is that if one can still maintain some view when one relies less and less on what is specific to one's position or form, it will be truer to reality." Ibid., 209.

³⁹ These so-called subjective facts primarily regard the subjective character of experience, but among other things Nagel also discusses personal identity, free will, agent-centered morality and the mind-body distinction.

⁴⁰ "If one could say how the internal and external standpoints are related, how each of them can be developed and modified in order to take the other into account, and how in conjunction they are to govern the thought and action of each person, it would amount to a world view." Nagel, *The View From Nowhere*, 3.

worldview. The central aim becomes to find out *how* an interplay of perspectives can work, that is, to recognize *when* a unification is possible and when it is not. Ultimately, objectivity is not a point of view in the same way as the subjective internal point of view. Rather, objectivity is a way of abstracting and detaching from inevitable subjective points of view:

Objectivity is a method of understanding. It is beliefs and attitudes that are objective in the primary sense. Only derivatively do we call objective the truths that can be arrived at in this way. To acquire a more objective understanding of some aspect of life or the world, we step back from our initial view of it and form a new conception which has that view and its relation to the world as its object. In other words, we place ourselves in the world that is to be understood. The old view then comes to be regarded as an appearance, more subjective than the new view, and correctable or confirmable by reference to it.⁴¹

Nagel thereby asserts that objectivity should still be sought, but only as far as it seems to provide a better understanding of reality. Decisively, not everything is better understood the more objectively it is viewed. Nagel defends that appearance and perspective are essential parts of reality. Hence, detachment is not the only ideal. Even the most hardheaded objectivity cannot deny the starting point that it seeks to escape. If the whole world is what is in question, then one has to admit, “that we and our personal perspectives belong to the world.”⁴² Ultimately, the ambition *to get outside of ourselves* cannot be completed. Despite Nagel’s strong affirmation of noumenal reality, he admits the limits of the possibility of accessing it (as the attempt to deny the access itself).⁴³

Nagel’s central critique, whether it is aimed against tenets of idealism (as settling on the subjective side) or scientism (as settling on the objective side), concerns the attempt to employ one single strategy for understanding, and to comprehend everything by means of one single form of understanding. Nagel argues for the use of different perspectives within a range between subjectivity and objectivity and the interplay of these perspectives. In Nagel’s model’s concern with the question of reality, it is his central aim to formulate a legitimate way of including subjective phenomena, in their irreducible form, to other ways of speaking of reality. Subjective phenomena are fundamentally a part of reality and therefore cannot be dismissed. Ultimately, the central question to Nagel’s model of perspectives is the question concerning reality, our understanding, and *how*

⁴¹ Ibid., 4.

⁴² Ibid., 6.

⁴³ “Since we are who we are, we can’t get outside of ourselves completely. Whatever we do, we remain subparts of the world with limited access to the real nature of the rest of it and of ourselves. There is no way of telling how much of reality lies beyond the reach of present or future objectivity or any other conceivable form of human understanding.” Ibid.

reality really is. Nagel's central claim is that reality is not univocal, but torn between subjective and objective perspectives.

Nevertheless, Nagel's approach to religion as a religious temper is not centered on the question of reality, but on *the self and its self-conception within and through the question of reality*. This is an important difference that one needs to keep in mind in the application of the model of perspectives to the question of religion. How does that match?

2.2 First-Person Cosmology?

In Nagel's treatment of the religious temper, the model of perspectives is applied to the question of religion. The question of a religious temper is a natural human disposition and therefore a part of the subjective perspective. The human being is understood through an initial religious temper as a disposition to ask 'the cosmic question' which is a reaching out for an external universal perspective. Hence, the religious temper reflects, in its concern with the world, an initial concern with oneself, but not by asking directly about oneself: The religious temper asks about the world and within this question about the world lies the initial concern with oneself. Nagel fails to make explicit in what sense a conception of the world provides self-conception. However, he does indicate why:

You must try to bring this conception of the universe and your relation to it into your life, as part of the point of view from which it is led. This is part of the answer to the question of who you are and what you are doing here.⁴⁴

Nagel characterizes the external perspective as '*a way of seeing*'. The other perspective is meant to provide us "with a way of seeing the point or sense of our lives."⁴⁵ We get an idea that in this view, or this 'way of seeing', one becomes aware of one's relation to the universe required for providing an understanding *of* oneself. Nagel does not require a conception or simply a *theory* of the world, what is required is a conception of the world *including* one's relation to it. The world that Nagel speaks about is the world that one is (already) in a relation to – it is one's world. Without this world-relation, one's access to the world, it would not be one's world, or one would be world-less. The relation must be included in one's conception.

The subjective or first-person perspective is the condition on which the human being seeks to understand itself as well as its best way of living. Nagel's idea of incorporating other perspectives into one's own asserts the uniqueness and irreducibility of the first-person perspective as the basic vantage point, which, in reaching out for 'greater' perspective, requires improvement of sight. This is an existential notion of perspectivity. The

⁴⁴ Nagel, "Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament," 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

religious temper, therefore, regards a need that is inherent to this first-person perspective in its way of being a particular perspective. The cosmic question is not primarily about the world: the cosmic question is asked *for the sake of the self-understanding* of oneself, a particular human being.

Considering what the cosmic question asks for, I would characterize any possible answer a *first-person cosmology*. I say *cosmology* because Nagel speaks of cosmology as the external perspective and as a conception about coherence that provides a certain hold, order and orientation as opposed to contingent chaos. There is no doubt that the cosmic question is concerned with the question about reality and the constitution of the world, but not as disinterested, disengaged or anonymous – there is a particular human being involved, centrally involved. To Nagel it is clear that the cosmic concern is grounded in a particular being, the perspective of this being, and its concern with its particularity. It is therefore a *first-person cosmology* because the question is of interest *to someone particular* and an interest of *someone particular*. Without the religious temper, as a disposition of a particular individual, the cosmic question would not matter, it would not even be asked.

Cosmology designates the feature of the order provided in the external view. The view of the world is a matter of the order of the world, an order which makes one's relation to the world comprehensible. This is what Nagel speaks of as the incorporation and integration of the external perspective into one's particular point of view, a way of locating oneself by a certain order. Furthermore, one needs this great cosmological perspective, for the benefit of a life that is practical. A central point is that the cosmological perspective, through which one lives one's life (the first-person cosmology), serves to support and guide one as a morally responsible agent in a life that requires reasons and meaning. Self-understanding, following through on that thought, serves, in part, to support the agent in identifying his own acts through their valuations as either morally good or bad. This means that the 'order of the world' serves to provide the human being with reasons beyond itself and coordinates for a moral orientation.

What can we say about all this? The overall ambition of Nagel's notion of the cosmic question is not unproblematic. Among the merits of Nagel's model and his exploration of the relation between religion and selfhood, we also encounter some limitations. The idea of 'a view of the world' seems in many ways to be too simplified when presented as a point of view external to someone. Much of the technical rhetoric of the polarity in the basic model, despite seeming seductive, lacks the nuances admitted by Nagel. However, the fundamental primacy of the subjective view implies that no external point of view (view of the world) can be understood, *as a view*, on par with one's own point of view, the point of view that one is. It seems

incomplete to continue opposing *two* perspectives as if they existed independently of each other. More likely, the external point of view is to be understood as a point (or points) of orientation *for* the internal point of view. Nagel makes the point that a worldview is a worldview of someone, and that it provides *interpretational resources* through which one seeks to understand oneself and one's experiences. However, as I see it, the polarity logic cannot sufficiently account for this. These problems seem important to the idea of integration: What does it mean to take up a certain view of the world? What is it that is integrated and into what?

The idea of a replacement of religion seems to suggest that one can do without an external point of view, and simply live through a God-shaped void until a new perspective is taken up. However, it seems more consistent with the model to assume that what *can* be replaced *has* been replaced. It seems fair to assume that a worldview is only challenged by another worldview. These aspects, which Nagel leaves under the broad and fuzzy category of *secularity*, invite a more critical discussion than I have intended here. However, in order to appreciate the merits of the notion of the cosmic question we do not have to agree with Nagel, neither in his understanding of the task of philosophy to replace religion, nor in the idea of the necessity of replacing religion, that is, the necessity of filling a void (however the void is understood).

The question concerning a secular basis for the religious temper seems to articulate a more common tenet: where can religious orientation place itself in the contemporary intellectual landscape? As much as Nagel gives meaning to religious orientation in the notion of the religious temper, he considers any religious self-understanding to be obsolete, and therefore aims directly for secular solutions. As Nagel points out, contemporary thinking is secular in the sense that certain answers for understanding oneself are dismissed. In his own description, traditional religion offers an external point of view through a transcendent divinity, and often in the idea of a transcendent realm as well as in transcendent powers. This is an absolute transcendence understood as an independent realm. To think on secular premises implies that this kind of transcendence is invalid. In Nagel's view secular philosophy is only concerned with the manifest world, the immanent world, which excludes any such sort of supernaturalism. Secular options for a worldview and a way of relating oneself to the world are therefore defined as secular by excluding anything beyond the immanent world. The basic criterion of secular thinking is an *immanence of the world*. And it is the possibilities of this criterion of immanence that Nagel intends to explore.

2.3 Contemporary Options

Nagel's discussion of the religious temper and the possibility of answering the cosmic question without religion proceeds by means of an assessment of different secular ideologies that offer some sort of cosmological outlook. By examining the possibilities of different positions, including *atheism*, *existentialism*, *humanism* and *naturalism*, Nagel makes an assessment of their compatibility based on this fundamental notion of the religious temper. When Nagel considers the potential of a naturalistic worldview as a secular basis for a religious orientation (and we shall turn to this example in particular) there is already a claim put forth about *why the world matters to human orientation*. This claim is the cosmic question.

At first Nagel makes the claim that a simple denial of the existence of the cosmic question along with existential concerns in general is untenable. Nagel takes this attitude as itself a response to the cosmic question. The cosmic question, in the desire for a human self-understanding, *is* there. The character of the question takes up too much space on the horizon of human life to simply be denied.⁴⁶

The second response Nagel characterizes as a response *from the inside out* or from the human point of view. It derives from an attitude "that the universe has nothing to offer that we can use, and that we are thrown back on our own resources."⁴⁷ One example of this response is the existentialist way of responding – Nagel refers to Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* – where one, in despair, makes

a virtue of the will to go on in spite of the complete indifference of the cosmos – without the kind of sense that religion could give to our lives. In that case, not to be defeated by pointlessness is what gives our lives their point.⁴⁸

Another example is a form of humanism that draws on our embeddedness in something larger, which is "the collective consciousness of humanity rather than the cosmos."⁴⁹ We are the ones, our community, that give sense to the world as a whole (first-person plural). From this perspective the greater whole is defined by a larger social identity and the comfort that we, despite the lack of meaning, are not alone.

What this kind of humanism offers is the transcendence of individuality. The point of view in this case lies in humanity as such, in the same way as it was applied in Kant's, and later in Rawls', moral theory. As Nagel mentions, this is what Rawls called the view '*sub specie aeternitatis*'. However, Nagel assesses that these varieties of humanism never really reach a cosmic point of view:

⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

They go part of the way toward incorporating a cosmic point of view into the life of the individual, and they certainly embed that life in something larger. But they stop with the value of human (and other) life itself, which does not receive endorsement from some higher value.⁵⁰

Nagel's idea of value is simply assumed within the model. Nevertheless, he finds that, in this kind of humanism, the human being is itself the source of value, and not something beyond human existence. Nagel thinks of a source of value beyond humanity as a *higher* value. In his understanding the human being is, in its religious temper, requesting a supra-human standpoint. Critically, we could ask whether Nagel's basic recognition of subjectivity does not inevitably tie him to some sort of humanism. If the cosmic question is determined as a *human* concern then an inside-out position seems unavoidable, as one cannot give up the concern itself.

In Nagel's view, we still have the option to move "further outside" the human perspective to "a larger view of our place in the universe."⁵¹ He finally turns to this third way of responding from the outside-in. It is "a way of seeing the point or sense of our lives from a perspective larger than the human one from which we naturally start."⁵² In Nagel's view, this is the perspective of the *natural order*. In this context, he encounters the question of a naturalistic worldview and the question whether naturalism offers a sufficient standpoint for human self-understanding.

When we travel further outside the human perspective than the universal value of humanity, or of rational or sentient beings, we come to the natural order. The scientific conception of that order is uncompromisingly secular. The question to be asked now is whether naturalism provides a view of one's relation to the universe that can be taken on as an essential part of the standpoint from which we lead our lives.⁵³

In his assessment of a naturalistic worldview, Nagel points to evolutionary biology as the most likely candidate. A tension emerges though because a strictly scientific form of biology does not primarily offer a replacement for religion, but instead a rejection. However, a different form of evolutionary biology might. Nagel refers to Nietzsche's interpretation of the genealogy of value, which is inspired by evolutionary biology. As Nagel reads Nietzsche, Nietzsche "turns a genealogical self-understanding, based on both biology and history, into a highly individual project of self-

⁵⁰ Ibid., 11.

⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

creation.”⁵⁴ For Nietzsche, free valuations can therefore be made through the evolutionary understanding of *why* one values.⁵⁵

But that was Nietzsche. Nagel makes clear that contemporary evolutionary biology, as well as the non-biological sciences like physics, have become radically anti-teleological when it comes to the history of evolution. As Nagel points out, they do not offer any foundation for human values at all.

This implies that it [the evolutionary perspective] is not suited to supply any kind of sense to our existence, if it is taken on as the larger perspective from which life is lived. Instead, the evolutionary perspective probably makes human life, like all life, meaningless, since it makes life a more or less accidental consequence of physics.⁵⁶

That conception [the naturalistic conception], far from offering us a sense of who we are, dissolves any sense of purpose or true nature that we may have begun with. The meaning of organic life vanishes in the meaninglessness of physics, of which it is one peculiar consequence.⁵⁷

Nagel’s evaluation of scientific naturalism is rather straight forward: “If naturalism means that everything reduces to physics, then there is no naturalistic answer to the cosmic question.”⁵⁸ At this point we ought to note that this is not the only form of naturalism one could consider. However, Nagel does not try to explore any variations of a naturalistic position that (hypothetically) could have changed the outcome of this assessment. It is the strict and indeed scientific form of naturalism that he has in mind.

Naturalism fails to provide an answer to the cosmic question. And in order to not simply fall back on traditional answers from existentialism and humanism, Nagel proposes a new kind of response: maybe naturalism can be integrated into an inside-out response. In Nagel’s proposal, this response is a Nietzsche-inspired kind of Platonism. In regard to Platonism, Nagel seems to have something in mind that most philosophers tend to ignore, which is Plato’s religious worldview. Plato’s religiously engaged

⁵⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁵ “Once we understand how humans have come to be ‘the sick animal,’ the animal in which the products of natural and social selection are in conflict, we can in full consciousness recreate ourselves to transcend this conflict... Instead of starting from one’s existing values, one steps back and tries first to understand them in virtue of one’s place in a much larger natural and historical order, and then to recast one’s life from this new, expanded starting point.” Nagel does not discuss Nietzsche’s radical ethical and political conclusions further, but he characterizes Nietzsche’s general strategy as one “of importing not just historical genealogy but evolutionary biology into the perspective from which one lives.” Ibid., 13.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 16.

philosophy, Nagel suggests, shows a profound and exemplary sensitivity to the cosmic question:

Plato was clearly concerned not only with the state of his soul, but also with his relation to the universe at the deepest level. Plato's metaphysics was not intended to produce merely a detached understanding of reality. His motivation in philosophy was in part to achieve a kind of understanding that would connect him (and therefore every human being) to the whole of reality – intelligibly and, if possible, satisfyingly.⁵⁹

In Nagel's view this form of Platonism seeks to make a non-reductive naturalism available to a human perspective. The central idea of this standpoint consists of "a nonaccidental fit between us and the world order: In other words, the natural order is such that, over time, it generates beings that are both part of it and able to understand it."⁶⁰ Hence, the Platonic attitude has to reconcile with the facts in order to offer some sense that can be internalized. Nagel suggests a response to the cosmic question, one that implements evolutionary history and the pre-human sources of human nature (as the larger perspective) into a human point of view. It corrects "a Nietzschean conception of mere humanity as a stage that we may be in a position to transcend."⁶¹ Is this humanism? Maybe. One could perhaps call it a form of humanism that is enriched or expanded by an evolutionary perspective of humanity.

Nagel settles on an answer that seems to integrate a sort of naturalism, or evolutionary orientated thinking - he calls it non-reductive – into an inside-out directed position. Nagel claims that an evolutionary approach in itself can bridge or merge the external with an internal perspective by being a natural order that gives rise to subjective perspectives, that is, to nature-understanding individuals. Nagel sees this as a translation of Plato into a contemporary and, roughly sketched, evolutionary oriented thinking.⁶²

The characterization I have given shows Nagel's conception of a combination of an internal standpoint with an external. In this, religion has been assigned a place within *the relation of the self with the world as a problem* in the way the self relates to itself. That being said, we can move on with a discussion of these aspects of the question of the world. However,

⁵⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁶¹ "Each of us, on this view, is a part of the lengthy process of the universe gradually waking up. It was originally a biological evolutionary process, and in our species, it has become a collective cultural process as well. It will continue, and seen from a larger perspective, one's own life is a small piece of this very extended expansion of organization and consciousness." Ibid.

⁶² See also Thomas Nagel, "Nietzsche's Self-creation," in *Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament: Essays 2002-2008* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 33-40.

with regards to the question of naturalism, two open ends in Nagel's approach stand out.

First, it might be worth asking whether religion, as characterized through the religious temper, necessarily has to be dismissed. It seems possible to move on with an understanding of religion that does not take secularity as its definitive. The general idea seems, despite Nagel's admissions, to provide a more adequate basis for speaking about religion *even* on secular premises. Put differently, why even demand a contemporary variety of religious orientation to be secular? If one looks to another contemporary position, *Religious Naturalism*, one finds a similar secular ambition to that of Nagel's, but carried out *as a religious option*. If a religious naturalism, as a religion with a naturalistic orientation, can offer a way of combining the religious temper with naturalism, then maybe the question concerning the world can achieve a different outcome than that proposed by Nagel.

Secondly, it might be worth asking whether a different notion of naturalism would change the situation. Nagel does not consider that contemporary philosophy provides alternatives to the reductive or scientific naturalism he has sketched. In particular, a revised non-reductive naturalism is given broad attention in contemporary philosophy. This revised naturalism is commonly called *liberal naturalism*. It therefore seems worth considering whether a liberal naturalism, as a non-reductive naturalism, can provide better answers to the cosmic question than the reductive naturalism presented by Nagel.

3 Religion and Second Nature

3.1 *The Possibility of a Religious Naturalism*

Nagel's approach to religiosity accords in many ways with the central ambitions of religious naturalism: to seek a response to the religious aspects of human nature on secular premises. Similar convictions are glimpsed in the implication that one's conception of the world is somehow involved in the natural aspiration for meaning, values, and self-understanding. In order to overcome traditional religious mythological cosmologies, a naturalistic worldview is considered an obvious alternative for framing the question of the world. However, contemporary varieties of religious naturalism do not seem to cohere with Nagel on the question as to *why* one should be concerned with naturalism as a matter of religiosity. We find that naturalism is represented in different varieties, but it is not clear why, or at least, consensus seems lacking.

In the introductory literature, religious naturalism is explained as a position that defends a naturalistic worldview as the basis for religious orientation. However, very different notions of naturalism seem to be at issue under this common label. This can be seen in how naturalism seemingly plays quite different roles in the different notion of religious orientation as such.⁶³

⁶³ The introductory material that is available is not impressive. The historian Gary Dorrien offers a comprehensive exposition of the historical background of religious naturalism in the tradition of American liberal theology in *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Crisis, Irony, and Postmodernity 1950-2005* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006). Jerome Stone, a religious naturalist, has also provided a historical 'group portrait' of the protagonists, which in his view forms a tradition that goes back to thinkers such as George Santayana and Samuel Alexander et al., but also carries an older heritage from philosophers such as Spinoza. Aside from these, various introductions to the science-religion debate contain shorter expositions, e.g. Willem Drees, *Religion and Science in Context: A Guide to the Debates* (New York: Routledge, 2010); Willem Drees, *Religion, Science, and Naturalism* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996). However, the literature often fails to coincide with regard to locating religious naturalism among other strands of thinking. In Ian Barbour's classic mapping of the science and religion debate, religious naturalism is understood as representing a conflicting relation: "These versions of naturalism retain at least some concepts from the Western religious heritage but radically reformulate them to accommodate contemporary science. Perhaps these authors might wish to be included in our fourth category, *Integration*, because they do integrate science with their minimalist understanding of religion. But in my judgment they have rejected so many traditional religious beliefs that they should be considered examples of *Conflict* – despite their thoughtful efforts at reinterpretation and their portrayal of some continuity as well as more evident discontinuity between their views and classical Christianity." Ian Barbour, *When Science Meets Religion* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2000), 157.

Aside from the differences regarding the naturalistic foundation, the terms in use, definitions, individual ambitions, and questions addressed, eventually point in quite different directions. The label 'religious naturalism' does not therefore, in itself, clarify the issues actually addressed by self-described religious naturalists. So, we could ask: what are the issues to which a religious naturalism primarily contributes? What are the kinds of question religious naturalism purports to answer? How do these compare with the 'cosmic question'?

Before I turn to specific proponents of religious naturalism, it seems fair to address the meaning of the concept naturalism. Religious naturalism (despite its connotation) is not per se a naturalistic position in a philosophical sense, but rather an attitude towards a naturalistic worldview.

According to the standard picture, there are two classical meanings of naturalism that cover the most common uses of the term. In the first sense, naturalism is understood as *antagonistic*, as mere *non-supernaturalism*, which implies the dismissal of any force or entity ontologically beyond the natural world holding a causal commerce with this world and its constitution.⁶⁴ In its second sense, naturalism means that the constitution of the world squares with the best theories offered by the natural sciences. According to this view, naturalism determines what actually counts as 'nature' and the 'natural'. This is commonly called *reductive naturalism*, or scientific naturalism, because it implies that all conceptions of the world from a context other than the natural scientific (theoretical) must be reducible to natural scientific assumptions (theories). This reductive form, however, affirms its meaning positively, while the first non-supernatural meaning states its meaning negatively, by rejecting what is not natural. In this regard, it is possible for the first meaning to coincide with the second.

From these two meanings we see how the designation of religious naturalism contains a sort of oxymoron if religion is taken as a conviction that there is more than nature, and naturalism is the conviction that nature is all there is. If naturalism in its non-supernatural meaning implies an anti-religious presumption, then what can we expect from someone who suggests a religious variety? The least we can say is that the concept of

⁶⁴ Flanagan, "Varieties of Naturalism." Also Barry Stroud underlines the fundamental influence of this tenet: "In the sense in which naturalism is opposed to supernaturalism, there has been no recent naturalistic turn in philosophy. Most philosophers for at least one hundred years have been naturalists in the nonsupernaturalist sense. They have taken it for granted that any satisfactory account of how human belief and knowledge in general are possible will involve only processes and events of the intelligible natural world, without the intervention or reassurance of any supernatural agent. Many people regard that as, on the whole, a good thing. But it is nothing new." Barry Stroud, "The Charm of Naturalism," in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 23.

nature and the way it pertains to religion somehow makes the central difference.

The first meaning – non-supernaturalism – is fundamental to the protagonists of religious naturalism, and it is key to understanding how they understand religion. Preliminarily, we can say that religion is understood as something natural that does not compromise the laws of nature. Religion is therefore strictly non-ontological, in the sense that religion does not interfere with the ontological principles of naturalism. However, religion is understood as something natural. It is understood as expressed in the epochal 1944 volume *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*. Here John Herman Randall Jr. writes:

There is no room for any Supernatural in naturalism – no supernatural or transcendental God and no personal survival after death. There is room for religion, to be sure, since that is an encountered fact of human experience. [...] There is room for celebration, consecration, and clarification of human goals; there is room [...] for man's concern with the eternal and with what Plato calls "the deathless and divine." But for naturalism eternity is no attribute of authentic Being, but a quality of human vision; and divinity belongs, not to what is existent, but to what man discerns in imagination.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the attempt to avoid supernaturalism – to deny anything transcendent to the natural world – depends on a clear determination of the world and its constitution. This has led the majority of religious naturalists to advocate some variety of naturalism in the second meaning, in which the constitution of the world squares with the theories of the natural sciences. Religious naturalism, roughly speaking, partakes in scientific and religious debates by proposing that traditional religious cosmologies should and can be replaced by a scientifically informed worldview, that is, by naturalism in the second sense.

In religious naturalism, naturalism serves as the ontological and cosmological framework for disparate notions of religion. However, the connection between 'the religious' and naturalism is not as clear. On the one hand, it seems to be a way of avoiding *supernaturalism* by giving up traditional and mythological cosmologies, which would be an attempt to adapt to secular conditions. We could call this an 'ontological strategy.' On the other hand, it could be a way of suggesting a religious potential *in* a naturalistic worldview, that is, to be religious about the naturalistic understanding of the world. We could call this a 'cosmological strategy.' On the basis of the ontological strategy (naturalism as a matter of ontology) any notion of religion must (in theory) be scientifically acceptable.

⁶⁵ John Herman Randall, Jr., "Epilogue: The Nature of Naturalism," in *Naturalism and the Human Spirit*, ed. Yervant Krikorian (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 358.

Interestingly, this does not itself connect religion with naturalism. However, if it is a cosmological strategy, then religion is connected to naturalism (and we can use Nagel's words here) as the 'greater perspective' that provides self-understanding and orientation, as the perspective to be incorporated into one's own particular experience of the world. This could potentially replace traditional religion, providing religious orientation within an immanent reality. However, such a way of combining religion and naturalism implies that *cosmology is essential to human religiosity* (as in the case of the cosmic question).

3.2 Losing the World from View

The common idea of human religiosity in religious naturalism is that of *a religious attitude that provides meaningfulness and orientation* in both a moral and an existential sense. The sharpest differences among the adherents can fairly be narrowed down to the question concerning the *source* of religious meaning or orientation.

As Nagel depicts it, traditional metaphysical and theological cosmology is centered on a highest divinity that is the origin or creator of the universe and that guaranties the universal order as expressed in the cosmology. In a religious practice, such as Christianity, the order assigned to the world through the conception of a creator can be said to be a constitutive factor of the Christian religious orientation. This central point is altered in religious naturalism.

Revised notions of divinity (God) maintain 'the divine' as the source of religious orientation. However, in contrast to the classical way of grounding cosmology in the concept of the divine, and in a notion of creation, most varieties of religious naturalism either give up the concept of a divinity completely or propose new non-cosmological and non-ontological concepts of the divine. Most proponents who maintain a notion of God designate God as the source of religious orientation *and not* as the order and origin of the world.⁶⁶ The decisive consequence of this separation of the divine (the source of orientation) and cosmology (the ordered world) is in fact the separation of the question of the world and religious orientation as such. This means a replacement of religious cosmology is not taking place. The religious cosmology is rejected, not *replaced*. The question about the order of the world is dismissed as a matter for religious orientation. In this way, the link between cosmology and religious orientation is lost. However, this makes the claim of naturalism rather odd. A central reason for defending naturalism suddenly becomes irrelevant to the question of religiosity.

⁶⁶ Jerome Stone, *Religious Naturalism Today: The Rebirth of a Forgotten Alternative* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008), 208f.

Again, Nagel's reason for considering a naturalistic stance is the search for a worldview through which one can conceive oneself in one's relation to the greater whole. Nagel's basic idea is that religious orientation is achieved through the conception of one's relation to the world and the reality in which one finds oneself. If it turns out that this is not an interest in naturalism for religious naturalists, then what notion of religious orientation does religious naturalism provide? Should naturalism still matter?

The contemporary protagonist of religious naturalism, Charley Hardwick, defends a revised variety of Christian theology. For Hardwick, religious naturalism is a non-supernatural Christianity with a strictly existential basis for speaking about God. In this sense, religious naturalism does not violate the ontological principles of naturalism. Hardwick interprets Christianity as completely neutral to the question of the world. The religious is a completely existential matter, and only regards the individual's need for meaning and self-understanding. Inspired by the demythologization of Rudolf Bultmann, Hardwick's theology posits a religious naturalism by means of two principles: "(a) that the content of the gospel is the offer of a new self-understanding (not a set of doctrines or beliefs) and (b) that the theological task is to explicate this self-understanding existentially (not to offer up doctrines suitable for belief)."⁶⁷ Hardwick explains it like this:

If the content of faith is an existential self-understanding we are not constrained at the outset by any metaphysical preconditions. Undertaking such an effort from a naturalist point of view will not import them [...] naturalism will not so much dictate what faith must say as constrain what it cannot say. It frames the theological task but does not define it in detail. Though theological propositions must be consistent with naturalism, naturalism alone will not prescribe their positive content. If, following Bultmann, faith requires no anterior "creedal" convictions, if it is not tied to any particular world view, and if on entirely independent grounds we are convinced that philosophical naturalism gives a true account of the world, then we may ask what the Christian confession looks like from this perspective.⁶⁸

In this example, we see that Hardwick speaks about naturalism *at the same time as* explaining why a naturalistic worldview (and any other conception of the world) is irrelevant to Christian faith. Faith is *not* tied to any metaphysical preconditions or worldviews. Consequently, there is no necessary connection between religiosity and the naturalism that Hardwick (still) finds necessary to defend. Hardwick's notion of religion seems to be concerned with existential issues in a way that does not involve ontology.

⁶⁷ Charley D Hardwick, *Events of Grace: Naturalism, Existentialism, and Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 4.

Naturalism renders the traditional idea of divine transcendence impossible. Nevertheless, alternative notions of transcendence are imported into religious naturalism. The conceptions of transcendence found in religious naturalism explore transcendence as a non-reductive dimension of human experience. However, in the way it is presented, there is no compromise of a naturalistic stance implied.

In an attempt to revise a traditional concept of transcendence, Jerome Stone defends an understanding of religiosity as *meaningful experiences*.⁶⁹ While Stone seems to have a similar existential emphasis as Hardwick, he rejects the legitimacy of traditional religions such as Christianity. Instead, religious orientation is achieved through experiences that provide orientation in their way of being meaningful, through experiences of transcendence. Stone considers this to be a form of religious orientation. He suggests that “occasions within our experience elicit responses that are analogous enough to the paradigm cases of religion that they can appropriately be called religious.”⁷⁰ These experiences of overwhelming meaning are, in Stone’s view, experiences of transcendence. This is not an interference of transcendent powers, an absolute transcendence, but simply a surplus of meaning from an experience that seems to carry with it a change of perspective and, in that way, is important to one’s self-understanding and the choice of values and ideals in one’s life.

Stone occasionally speaks about nature and the world in order to underline that his idea of experiences of transcendence does not violate the laws of nature. However, he does not address the question of the world in regard to religious orientation. Stone defends a form of religiosity that consists of a situational orientation in deep-impact human life-experiences. It is heavily subjective, even though subjectivity as such is barely mentioned aside from the central importance of personal and non-reductive experiences. It is not in Stone’s interest to propose a theory of subjectivity. He seems to isolate religious orientation within particular subjective experiences, and not as a matter of the conditions of subjectivity. Stone’s ‘philosophy of transcendence’ has little to do with naturalism, maybe even too few for his self-acclaimed designation as a ‘Religious Naturalist’ to make sense beyond stating a non-supernaturalistic stance.

Despite the claim of naturalism, the irony of both Hardwick’s and Stone’s varieties of religious naturalism is that they indirectly suggest that cosmology, naturalistic or not, is irrelevant to the matter of human religiosity. There seems to be a lot of rhetoric that implies that naturalism plays a role in (positively) defining what is central to the propositions of

⁶⁹ Jerome Stone, *The Minimalist Vision of Transcendence: A Naturalist Philosophy of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

⁷⁰ Jerome Stone, “Varieties of Religious Naturalism,” *Zygon* 38, no. 1 (March 1, 2003): 89.

religious naturalism, but nothing explicit. The question of the world is dismissed, along with one's relation to the universe, the particular to totality, the finite to the infinite. While Nagel managed to combine the structure of traditional religious orientation with secular options in the notion of the religious temper, these religious naturalists seek to reinvent a new notion of religion through Christian and non-Christian religiosity respectively.

Stone and Hardwick are central figures in the contemporary religious naturalism, but their approach to naturalism and religion is influenced by the ambitions of past thinkers, especially Henry Nelson Wieman (1884-1975). Wieman was a dedicated naturalist and Chicago-theologian. He might well be the most important influence for contemporary religious naturalism. Wieman possessed a strong appreciation of scientific methods and was deeply inspired by James' and Whitehead's treatment of religious experience. This led him to a rigorously *empirical theology*, a theology concerned with what transforms the human life for the better. As the human being cannot transform or improve itself, it transforms through creative interchange, Wieman claimed. This creative interchange Wieman calls *God*.⁷¹

Wieman's notion of religion was that of creative transformation of human existence toward the good. In this notion of religion, the creative interchanges that enable the human being to escape or avoid evil constitute the core of a religious life. A naturalistic conception of the world is not directly involved in religious orientation. As a revised sort of theism, Wieman called this creative, life-transforming and basically value-focused process, *God*. And yet, still there is no demand for cosmology. Instead, there is a focus on human experiences and development.

In the case of Stone and Hardwick, it is not the worldview itself, but the circumstances of human life – on an existential level – that provide religious orientation. In other words, they do not answer a cosmological question because they do not construe religious orientation as concerned with the question of the world. Hardwick seems to answer a question about how Christian theology can be rewritten without ontological statements that counters scientific theories. Stone seems to answer yet another,

⁷¹ Intense dialogues with Dewey and Dewey's writings helped Wieman to formulate the vision of a theological science. Because God is what God does, Wieman stated, theology should redefine itself as a science by making use of empirical inquiry for the purpose of investigating the empirical (experiential) reality of the divine, which is *the creative transformation of human beings toward the good*. Henry Wieman, *Religious Experience and Scientific Method* (New York: Macmillan, 1926); Henry Wieman, *The Source of Human Good* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1946); Henry Wieman, *Man's Ultimate Commitment* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958).

somehow non-Christian, question about the potential of meaningful experiences. We can understand this as a sort of religious orientation – if we take their word for it, but we have to admit that they dismiss the question of the world as a matter of human religiosity.

Religious naturalism has difficulties in following Nagel's request for a first-person cosmology insofar as the general concern with religion regards the question about meaning and moral orientation without (necessarily) having a real theoretical interest in naturalism. The best description of the relation between religious naturalists and naturalism seems to be a sort of supporting attitude. Religious naturalism, as a form of religious thinking, supports the legitimacy and authority of the natural sciences but, as I have argued, this does not necessarily imply the idea of a naturalistic cosmology as the background of a religious orientation.

This problem in religious naturalism seems to cause the loss of the connection between the human perspective *and* its relation to the world. A strict naturalism seems to deny an adequate understanding of the human world-relation. This is also the central point in Nagel's attack on reductionism. The religious naturalists leave aside the ontological implications of the non-reductionism that they claim. Nagel never really provides any arguments against religion, but simply assumes that religious answers are less available to the contemporary intellectual landscape. Secularity is not necessarily a verdict concerning religion, but is more likely to be understood as a verdict concerning the role of religion within civil society.⁷² Nagel has no intention of dismissing the practice of a religious orientation per se. His agenda is more an attempt to reconcile contemporary philosophy with its oldest task of providing the outlook and the means for orientation and self-understanding regardless of a particular definition of religion. To raise Nagel's cosmic question as a question for a philosophy of religion enables many different answers and opportunities.

In philosophy, this has been given much attention. That being said, religious naturalists seem, regarding the treatment of the concept of naturalism, to be more generally oriented towards the natural sciences than to the tenets of contemporary philosophy. The non-reductionism that is implied in the positions of religious naturalism seems to have been explored, nurtured, and contested more directly in philosophical circles. The concept of naturalism has, in many ways, been modified, revised, and reformulated in order to find room for the human aspect within some notion of naturalism. *Liberal Naturalism* seems, in this regard, to be the

⁷² If it seems as if a discussion of 'the secular' is being avoided, this is because the interest of this study is primarily anthropological and secularism is a social and political concept that is only understood within a broader discussion of the development of political and ideological structures within modern society. See Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007).

most thorough attempt to formulate a non-reductive philosophical naturalism.

3.3 Reductive and Liberal Naturalism

In the previous section, the primary distinction of naturalistic thinking was that between a non-supernatural naturalism and a reductive (scientific) naturalism. The question now at issue is whether a revised form of naturalism can provide what is required for the question of the world as raised in the discussion with Nagel. This revised naturalism is commonly called *liberal naturalism*. The question is as to whether a liberal naturalism, as a non-reductive naturalism, can provide a better answer to the cosmic question than the reductive naturalism presented by Nagel.

The polarities of naturalism and supernaturalism presented in the last section – a monism of nature and an ontological dualism – have led modern philosophy into many quarrels. Roughly sketched, modern thinking has attempted, on the one hand, to liberate itself from religious supernaturalism, and, on the other hand, to find ways to maintain a proper explanation of the undeniable uniqueness of human experience. Liberal naturalism is somewhere between monism and dualism, claiming to be able to avoid the dilemmas inherent to both poles. It does this by raising epistemological questions concerning conditions of human experience and knowledge more radically than reductive naturalism. Nonetheless, liberal naturalism still predominantly associates more with reductive naturalism than supernaturalism by expanding on an unaltered reductive naturalism.⁷³

Reductive naturalism can be characterized through two distinguishable components: an ontological and a methodological. David Papineau calls it a discernment between “the contents of reality”, on the one side, and “the

⁷³ In the following presentation of *liberal naturalism* I draw mostly on literature from the two volumes edited by Mario De Caro and David MacArthur, eds., *Naturalism in Question* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); Mario De Caro and David MacArthur, eds., *Naturalism and Normativity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). For broader aspects of the central concept of naturalism, what I call reductive naturalism, see Flanagan, “Varieties of Naturalism”; J Kim, “The American Origins of Philosophical Naturalism,” *Journal of Philosophical Research APA Centennial* (January 1, 2003); David Papineau, “Naturalism,” n.d., <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/naturalism/>; Günter Gawlick, “Naturalismus,” ed. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe, 2007 1976); Morris R. Cohen, “Naturalism,” ed. Robert Audi, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Sebastian Gardner, “The Limits of Naturalism and the Metaphysics of German Idealism,” in *German Idealism: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Espen Hammer (London: Routledge, 2007), 19-49; Goetz and Taliaferro, *Naturalism*.

ways of investigating reality”, on the other side.⁷⁴ According to Papineau, the basis of causal explanation implied in ‘ontological naturalism’ fundamentally binds it to a spatiotemporal determination of reality. In this we sense how the term ‘nature’ can be used not only to mark contrasts between ontological realms, but also to claim one single ontological realm *within which* all contrasts are contrasts and not borders. This is how naturalism can be said to mark a worldview. Reductionism protects this monism of explanation insofar as nothing can be said to be so extraordinary or artificial that it does not belong to nature as the totality of all there is.

Consequently, many contemporary thinkers adopt a naturalist view of e.g. the mental realm, the biological realm, and the social realm for the sake of explanation. Naturally, the fundamental materialistic implications of causal explanations reflect the recognition of the most fundamental sciences, such as biology, chemistry and most of all physics. In a strict physicalistic approach for example, the reduction asserts that basic reality follows the laws of physics entirely. However, consensus is lacking between many different sciences and philosophical strands, which is why there exists other varieties with more moderate doctrines e.g. about the nature of causation. One example is ‘token identity’, the view of causes as particular events considered independent of any properties they may hold. Another example is ‘property dualism’, which is a non-reductive yet physicalist view that claims two essentially different properties of nature. Regarding mental states, property dualism contains the idea that the qualitative nature of consciousness is non-reducible to physics as a genuinely emergent phenomenon.⁷⁵

The central difference between reductive and liberal naturalism lies in the notion of a non-reductive class of ‘entities’ or phenomena with which liberal naturalism expands the concept of nature, or the natural, promoted by reductive naturalism. In this sense, liberal naturalism could be seen as a variety internal to scientific naturalism regarding the inventory of what ultimately exists. If we take reductive naturalism to be the position of the natural sciences, which implies that everything that exists can be explained with the ontological assumptions of the best scientific theories, then liberal naturalism introduces a new distinction that makes room for a class of

⁷⁴ “The ontological component is concerned with the contents of reality, asserting that reality has no place for ‘supernatural’ or other ‘spooky’ kinds of entity. By contrast, the methodological component is concerned with the ways of investigating reality, and claims some kind of general authority for the scientific method.” Papineau, “Naturalism.”

⁷⁵ See *Ibid.*, 1.4. See also Mario De Caro and David MacArthur, “Introduction: The Nature of Naturalism,” in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. Mario De Caro and David MacArthur (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4; Cohen, “Naturalism.”

irreducible ‘entities’ or phenomena that are ontologically independent. This independency is formulated by an epistemological distinction (for example, in the way McDowell asserts that knowledge as a human phenomenon sets itself apart from physical reality). Reductive naturalism, according to its own logic, cannot exhaustively account for the nature of such entities as knowledge. Liberal naturalism, however, provides the basis for still considering these entities natural.

The ambition of the protagonists of liberal naturalism is to propose an alternative naturalism that gives priority to *epistemic practice*: how to account for *knowledge, thinking, and modal properties* (such as normative properties) on the basis of a reality (nature) as defined by the natural sciences. This is the central question that liberal naturalism sets out to solve. It does so by means of a redefinition and widening of the notion of nature and of the concept of ‘the natural’. The irreducible entities recognized by liberal naturalism have, regarding their ontological status, no causal power, and do not “contravene the laws of the world investigated by the sciences.”⁷⁶ Concerning the epistemological status of these entities, no “special modes of understanding that would be irreconcilable with rational understanding”⁷⁷ are required. Both characteristics are crucial points that show why liberal naturalism is not supernaturalism.

3.4 McDowell’s Naturalism of Second Nature

The American philosopher, John McDowell, has played an important role in pointing to philosophical problems caused by the influence of modern science on contemporary naturalistic thinking. In McDowell’s central work, *Mind and World*, he elaborates a basic concern with the concept of knowledge as a matter of representation of a naturalistic world. This concern, to put it simply, regards a thread of naturalism to leave the world disenchanted and empty of meaning if the notion of meaning cannot itself be established properly within that same world.⁷⁸ This is the problem

⁷⁶ Mario De Caro and Alberto Voltolini, “Is Liberal Naturalism Possible?,” in *Naturalism and Normativity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 79.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁷⁸ McDowell has been productive in the field of ethics as well, and has contributed to the philosophical discussion regarding ‘naturalising ethics’, see for example John McDowell, “Two Sorts of Naturalism,” in *Virtues and Reasons: Philippa Foot and Moral Theory: Essays in Honour of Philippa Foot*, ed. Rosalind Hursthouse, Gavin Lawrence, and Warren Quinn (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1995), 149-179. In my discussion of McDowell’s naturalism, I primarily refer to his position as formulated in his seminal work *Mind and World*, which presents a naturalism of second nature that McDowell, roughly speaking, still defends. McDowell, *Mind and World*. Lately McDowell has taken on the label of ‘liberal naturalism’, which is motivated by the following rationale: “To avoid conceiving thinking and knowing as supernatural, we should stress that thinking and knowing are aspects of our lives. The

through which McDowell develops his so-called liberal naturalism. In *Mind and World*, McDowell presents this as a “naturalism that makes room for meaning.”⁷⁹ In broader terms, his is a naturalism that admits an additional epistemic feature of cognition within the realm of nature, viz., a human or second nature.⁸⁰

The central ambition of McDowell’s project is to broaden the parameter of reductive naturalism and propose an ‘ontology of meaning’ by means of a naturalism that is understood differently. In McDowell’s own words, this is a relaxed naturalism or a “naturalized Platonism”⁸¹ as opposed to a rampant Platonism (some might say an Aristotelianism). McDowell’s proposition of a liberal naturalism thus seeks to integrate Aristotle’s notion of second nature into a reductive naturalism without violating the latter.⁸² The question with which we are addressing McDowell here is whether he, while leaving the ontological premises more or less intact, changes the prospects for a human self-understanding on the basis of a naturalistic outlook. I shall therefore present those central stages of this “naturalism of

concept of a life is the concept of the career of a living thing, and hence obviously the concept of something natural. [...] Thinking and knowing are part of our way of being animals. Thus the fact that we are knowers and thinkers does not reveal us as strangely bifurcated, with a foothold in the animal kingdom—surely part of nature—and a mysterious separate involvement in an extranatural realm of rational connections.” John McDowell, “Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind,” in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 94–95. For a further discussion of McDowell’s discussion of naturalistic positions see Fink, “Three Sorts of Naturalism.”

⁷⁹ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 78.

⁸⁰ Other varieties of liberal naturalism are for example that of Huw Price whose idea of ‘subject naturalism’ seeks to change focus from the placement of entities within an ‘object naturalism’ to a pre-scientific semantics of the manifest language that gives rise to the conceptions about certain entities; or Stephen L. White’s proposition of subjectivity in the form of the agential perspective as the basis for visual experience. Huw Price, ed., “Naturalism Without Representationalism,” in *Naturalism in Question* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 71–88; Stephen L. White, “Subjectivity and the Agential Perspective,” in *Naturalism in Question*, ed. Mario De Caro and David Macarthur (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 201–227.

⁸¹ McDowell, *Mind and World*, 91.

⁸² The central point to this is “the Aristotelian idea that normal mature human beings are rational animals. Animals are, as such, natural beings, and a familiar modern conception of nature tends to extrude rationality from nature. The effect is that reason is separated from our animal nature, as if being rational placed us partly outside the animal kingdom. Specifically, the understanding is distanced from sensibility. And that is the source of our philosophical impasse. In order to escape it, we need to bring understanding and sensibility, reason and nature, back together.” Ibid., 108.

second nature”⁸³ that make it relevant to our discussion of a first-person cosmology.

McDowell’s criticism of reductive naturalism, in his terms a ‘bald naturalism,’ aims at its strict concept of nature. ‘Bald naturalism’ consists of a reductive naturalistic account of the world that takes nature to be an entirely *law-governed realm*, exhausting the totality of *all there is*. If nature is understood as the realm of law – following the natural sciences – and nature is all there is, it then becomes highly problematic to speak about the reality of phenomena like *meaning, rationality, morality* and *human freedom*. Within such a concept of nature, we can only understand a human experience as an event in a causal series without any justificatory role in our thinking. How then are we to discern true from false? If we want our experience to have a justificatory role in our thinking (McDowell refers to this as ‘the tribunal of experience’), we must still concede that it makes no direct contact with the way things are in the realm of law. This central relation of experience and nature is the center of attention. McDowell’s claim is a notion of *normative intentionality*, which he sees as ‘a minimal empiricism’, “the idea that experience must constitute a tribunal, mediating the way our thinking is answerable to how things are, as it must be if we are to make sense of it as thinking at all.”⁸⁴

McDowell seeks to determine why the possibility of our *access* to the world and its constitution implicates that nature is more than simply law-governed. This focus of McDowell’s agenda can, in a broader perspective, be seen as an expression of the more general priority given to epistemology in modern philosophy. The question of reality is conditioned by our access to reality. However, McDowell wants more than to state an epistemological point. His argumentation sets out from the ontological implications of bald naturalism to make room for epistemological categories, which receive their initial support from practical philosophy. McDowell’s arguments therefore attack the insufficiency of a concept of nature that is neither apt nor equipped for the practical aspects of human life.

The question about a liberal naturalism is the question of whether naturalism, in its reductive form, can be improved with the right epistemological furnishing. For this purpose, McDowell develops a Kant-

⁸³ Ibid., 86.

⁸⁴ Ibid., xii. Among the many details that cannot be explored here further is McDowell’s dismissal of the idea that experience contains representations that are *not* conceptually structured, so-called ‘non-conceptual content’. Inspired by Kant’s rather complex concept of *spontaneity*, McDowell suggests with his minimal empiricism a passive and an active aspect of our experience: that we are passive in our perceptual experience of the world while active in how we conceptualize it. The premise of conceptual content thereby means that the conceptual structure works all the way out in perception.

motivated notion of intentionality, which he deploys in a social, practical, and fundamentally normative realm. The normative aspect of intentionality is not a random, but an essential feature. Thinking is not a bare receptive matter but essentially an activity in judgments and propositions. Thinking involves justification in the sense that the thinking subject participates in certain norms and standards (games) for giving and asking for reasons. The practical and social world of the semantic rules to which our intentionality is subordinated is essential for making knowledge possible at all.

McDowell follows Wilfred Sellars' critique of the *naturalistic fallacy* (the mistake of understanding all concepts, including knowledge, within a logical space of empirical description) and *The Myth of the Given*.⁸⁵ This implies the need to separate concepts according to two different sorts of intelligibility. McDowell's point is that we ought to discern concepts that serve to place things in a logical space that is structured by *reasons*, from concepts that can be employed in empirical description. As stated by Sellars, the concept of knowledge belongs to a normative context, which he called *the logical space of reasons*, as opposed to *the logical space of nature*, the realm of laws. Knowledge belongs to a normative space of reasons because *knowledge can be true or false*. Knowledge complies with certain truth-conditions, to wit, knowing something means taking something to be true. Normativity thereby builds the foundations of the space of reasons to the extent that to know something means to take it to be true.⁸⁶

These two *sui generis* logical spaces are employed in order to understand concepts of different kinds.⁸⁷

[T]he logical space of nature is the logical space in which the natural sciences function [...] to place something in nature on the relevant conception, as contrasted with placing it in the logical space of reasons, is to situate it in the realm of law.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ See Wilfred Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* vol. 1 (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1956), 253-329; McDowell, *Mind and World*, 3-23.

⁸⁶ The central quote of Sellars is this: "In characterizing an episode or a state as that of knowing, we are not giving an empirical description of that episode or state; we are placing it in the logical space of reasons, of justifying and being able to justify what one says." Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind," 298f. This idea of Sellars is today represented as a position that has been labelled *normative intentionality*. Besides McDowell, the group of protagonists also counts Robert Brandom and Robert Pippin.

⁸⁷ "Whatever the relations are that constitute the logical space of nature, they are different in kind from the normative relations that constitute the logical space of reasons [...] this dichotomy of logical spaces [...]" McDowell, *Mind and World*, xv.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, xiv. "The idea of receiving an impression is the idea of a transaction in nature. On Sellars's principles, then, to identify something as an impression is to place it in a logical space other than the one in which talk of knowledge—or, to keep the

We ought to notice that McDowell's distinction between a law-governed realm and a reason-governed realm is not an ontological distinction between mind and world, which would be a misleading assumption (however, an assumption easily made considering the title). The issue is not the identification of a logical mind over and against something else, e.g. the world as a thing in itself. What McDowell proposes is a distinction between two logical spaces that represent two sorts of intelligibility. This is, in both cases, an explanation of the form that intelligibility takes in each space, one by means of laws and one by means of reasons. The gravitation towards ontological dualism that could be drawn from the title, *Mind and World*, is simply not what McDowell has in mind. His point is that two different forms of comprehension and meaning apply to different concepts. This is also the reason why he warns against confusing the scientific understanding of nature with nature itself.⁸⁹ The decisive point to be made is that both spaces are logical spaces. The two spaces are meaningful according to two different sorts of logic. This suggests that the real issue is not the constitution of nature, (McDowell barely makes any remarks concerning the world, aside from the world-directedness of intentionality) but *meaning* and the identification of two logical spaces as two separate semantic fields.

McDowell approaches naturalism at the level of intelligibility, as a matter of how we make sense of the world and how the world is made intelligible. The split represented in McDowell's naturalism of second nature is a split in intelligibility. From this it follows that the claim derived from the naturalistic fallacy is not ontological, but the claim that a scientific form of explanation is insufficient. According to this claim the world is not uniform or univocal, but applies to different logical spaces (at least two).

The far-reaching conditions of the shape of meaning in the space of reasons is the motivation for McDowell's use of Aristotle and Gadamer to introduce the concepts of *second nature*, '*Bildung*', 'modes of life', 'World' (as opposed to environment) and Gadamer's notion of 'tradition' (see especially lecture IV and VI). McDowell's understanding of logical spaces can be understood as a theory of sense-diversity between how we understand the world, and how we understand our access to the world.

Addressing the question of sense-diversity on the terms of naturalistic thinking, McDowell reformulates the question of ontology and epistemology. Meaning, in the space of reasons, is factual according to a rationality that works through practical life, practical reason. McDowell

general case in view, talk of world-directedness, knowledgeable or not—belongs." McDowell, *Mind and World*, xv.

⁸⁹ "If we identify nature with what natural science aims to make comprehensible, we threaten, at least, to empty it of meaning." McDowell, *Mind and World*, 70.

points to the notion of second nature in Aristotle as a model for understanding how the human being, in its natural constitution and as a rational animal, holds the capacity to conform and mature – McDowell uses the German word *Bildung* – and to shape our lives according to reason on a completely natural basis.⁹⁰ It is on the basis of this rationality that meaning in the space of reasons exists. For Sellars, this is an anthropological implication and a consequence of the idea that the logical space of reasons cannot be integrated into the logical space of nature, the realm of law. Second nature is irreducible.

The central question (maybe the only question) is *meaning* and how we make sense according to different logics (semantic fields we could say).⁹¹ Despite the labels of first and second nature, the dichotomy is not within nature (in the broadest sense of the term). The dichotomy is within our epistemic capacities, and it relies on another inevitable distinction, namely, the distinction between the world or nature ('all there is') and our access to it. This is the distinction implied in any empiricism or representationalism. McDowell must be understood as stating that whatever is can be understood by means of one of two sorts of intelligibility. From the logical space of nature concerned with the explanations of a law-governed nature, we take a step back, a transcendental step back, to the knowledge about nature which has different implications and conditions of intelligibility, to the space of reasons. Consequently, it seems necessary to apply McDowell's notion of nature, the all-including frame, to something already accessed, something already meaningful and therefore always placed within a logical space.

3.5 The Human Mode of Being

McDowell's explanation of the sense-dichotomy of the logical spaces is supported by the concept of 'life'. In his introduction of second nature, McDowell moves from a focus on *experience* to a focus on *action*. Second nature, as the logical space of reasons in which thinking and knowing has its place, is not external to first nature in an ontological sense, as

⁹⁰ "Our *Bildung* actualizes some of the potentialities we are born with; we do not have to suppose it introduces a non-animal ingredient into our constitution. And although the structure of the space of reasons cannot be reconstructed out of facts about our involvement in the realm of law, it can be the framework within which meaning comes into view only because our eyes can be opened to it by *Bildung*, which is an element in the normal coming to maturity of the kind of animals we are. Meaning is not a mysterious gift from outside nature." Ibid., 88.

⁹¹ Donald Davidson has criticized McDowell for dismissing the mind-body problem by removing the body and the external world from the equation, which to Davidson amounts to an updated mentalism. Donald Davidson, "Reply to John McDowell," in *The Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, ed. Lewis E. Hahn (Chicago, Ill.: Open Court, 1999), 105-108.

supernaturalism; it belongs to something deeply rooted in first nature: *human lives*. McDowell calls it “our mode of living”, which is “our way of actualizing ourselves as animals.”⁹² The parameter of meaning in the space of reasons is based in the human life-world, including our social interaction, our historical self-understanding (tradition) and affective practices that set us apart from animal life-forms.⁹³

To avoid conceiving thinking and knowing as supernatural, we should stress that thinking and knowing are aspects of our lives. The concept of a life is the concept of the career of a living thing, and hence obviously the concept of something natural. But there are aspects of our lives whose description requires concepts that function in the space of reasons. We are rational animals. Our lives are patterned in ways that are recognizable only in an inquiry framed within the space of reasons.⁹⁴

Second nature is not only a practical rationality in isolation from nature, but, essential to human nature, it is the basis of the human world-relation in general. McDowell therefore turns to Aristotle’s practical philosophy.⁹⁵ He believes himself to be dissolving the Kantian dualism of reason and nature without replacing it – at least not with another dualism of the same kind. Reason is human. The human being is a natural being, and normativity is a natural component inherent to human nature. This, he says, is no regular dualism, but a “deeper dualism”, the dualism from which all other dualisms derive:

Modern philosophy has taken itself to be called on to bridge dualistic gulfs, between subject and object, thought and world. This style of approach to meaning sets out to bridge a dualism of norm and nature. The claim might be that this is a deeper dualism, the source of the familiar dualisms of modern philosophy.⁹⁶

With regard to the norm-nature bridge, McDowell understands the actualization (*‘Bildung’*) of the rational animal on the premises of the individual.⁹⁷ Consequently, the space of reasons is itself conditioned by the particularity of individuals. The agent is situated in a practical and ethical context in which the agent’s reasons have their ground. The model of Aristotelian *practical wisdom* (*‘phronesis’*) provides a notion of situated rationality, which implies “that one can reflect only from the midst of the way of thinking one is reflecting about.”⁹⁸ Second nature is therefore one’s

⁹² McDowell, *Mind and World*, 78.

⁹³ Ibid., 108–126.

⁹⁴ McDowell, “Naturalism in the Philosophy of Mind,” 94f.

⁹⁵ McDowell particularly takes up the notion of *‘phronesis’* as presented in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* book VI.

⁹⁶ McDowell calls it ‘a new clarity about nature’, McDowell, *Mind and World*, 93.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 78.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 81. E.g. “If a person conceives her practical situation in terms provided for her by a specific ethical outlook, that will present her with certain apparent reasons for

particular character as developed through concrete practical situations. The ethical outlook is not provided from outside my sensibility to the practical obligations of concrete situations, but nurtured and molded from ‘within’ – that is, through my rational responsiveness to concrete situations. This is the actualization of second nature by means solely inherent to nature.

3.6 Assessing the Options

Many similarities between Nagel’s subjective-objective distinction and McDowell’s two logical spaces can be drawn. It is not my aim here to make a general assessment of McDowell’s proposition, but to reconsider Nagel’s notion of *the cosmic question* in regard to McDowell’s naturalism and general model. The model presents a distinction between what can be framed by naturalistic thinking and what cannot. The general idea is that both logical spaces concern nature, as presented in McDowell’s inclusive and non-restrictive employment of the term. The distinction, however, is a distinction of intelligibility.

If we translate McDowell’s model into a setting compatible with Nagel’s, we return to the question of the relation between first and second nature. This relation is crucial to the matter of the cosmic question. Is there any connection or exchange between first and second nature? Can first nature be a cosmological outlook for the rational animal, and thereby provide the value-resources for practical interaction within the space of reasons? To wit, is the logical space of nature (the realm of law) that which provides a self-understanding and orientation in the logical space of reasons? Can the law-governed components of first nature be, or provide, the reasons in second nature?

As already suggested, the world is not the central issue in McDowell’s liberal naturalism. From the perspective of a minimal empiricism and the idea of normative intentionality, the world (in the sense articulated by McDowell only as nature) is the ontological framework for the entire epistemic enterprise of logical spaces. McDowell’s concern is therefore the conditions of meaning, and not the content of meaning. The separation of two logical spaces does not depend on any mutuality. The content of the logical space of nature seems to be an isolated matter for natural science and not a means to an end or endeavor of second nature. The concept of ‘life’, career, and the human mode of living do not point us in the direction of an integration of first nature knowledge. Furthermore, first nature does

acting. On a better understanding of Aristotle’s picture, the only standpoint at which she can address the question whether those reasons are genuine is one that she occupies precisely because she has a specific ethical outlook. That is a standpoint from which those seeming requirements are in view as such, not a foundational standpoint at which she might try to reconstruct the demandingness of those requirements from scratch, out of materials from an independent description of nature” McDowell, *Mind and World*, 80.

not seem to represent a worldview in the sense described by Nagel. In that way, second nature seems to work on its own isolated premises. This means that the attempt, armed with McDowell's model, to make a naturalistic outlook of the world available to a moral agent, might not be possible.

Robert Pippin has offered an explication of this problem, which he believes is often overlooked by protagonists of naturalism. In this explication, Pippin seeks to clarify why reductive explanations are useless for practical living. His central argument is based on a notion of the self as a moral agent. The situational conditions of the space of reasons are designated as the "agential" or "first-personal perspective,"⁹⁹ and this is an irreducible perspective.

Knowing something about the evolutionary benefits of altruistic behavior might give us an interesting perspective on some particular altruistic act, but for the agent, first-personally, the question I must decide is whether I ought to act altruistically and, if so, why. I cannot simply stand by, waiting to see what my highly and complexly evolved neurobiological system will do. The system doesn't make the decision, I do – and for reasons that I find compelling, or that, at least, outweigh countervailing considerations. [...] It is in this sense that the first-personal perspective is strictly unavoidable: I am not a passenger on a vessel pulled hither and yon by impulses and desires; I have to steer.¹⁰⁰

The point is that an agent is required to act and to decide. An agent cannot replace that requirement with an evolutionary or naturalistic explanation. Just as Nagel asserted that there is no basis for ethical responses in evolutionary thinking, a naturalistic framework cannot 'steer the vessel'. Naturalistic facts do not impose any claim or obligation on me. My reason and choice of action is my sense of obligation provided by fundamental beliefs, beliefs that might be grounded in a worldview, but neither naturalism nor 'the logical space of nature' can *be* such a worldview. The notion of worldview or cosmology is not detached from the world in which I am the responsible agent, but fundamentally implied in it. The split asserted by McDowell shows how fundamentally different explanations can be. However, it also shows that human life entails components that are not just incompatible but inexplicable in the context of a law-governed reality. Human freedom and consciousness seem to be such components.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Robert Pippin, "Natural and Normative," *Daedalus* (January 1, 2009): 38, <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/abs/10.1162/daed.2009.138.3.35>.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁰¹ David Papineau is one of the peers who criticizes McDowell for leaving the question concerning the relation between scientific facts and human values and norms inarticulate and blurred. David Papineau, *The Roots of Reason: Philosophical Essays on Rationality, Evolution, and Probability* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2003), 19–20. Another critique has been raised by Hans Fink who

Nagel characterizes subjectivity as something that is capable of incorporating another perspective. Besides being a point of view, or a perspective, subjectivity consists in the capacity to operate with different perspectives. This is the context in which Nagel introduced the question of naturalism, and assessed naturalism, not simply as a theory, but as something to be incorporated into a lived human life. This is the characterization of the question of the world in Nagel's theory of the religious temper. Surely, there is a greater question concerning the ground of knowledge, concerning reality wavering, a question central to both Nagel's and McDowell's thinking, but the reason *why* reality, the world, is such an important question lies in the fundamental disposition to seek an understanding of oneself and one's relation to everything else.

Nagel's model shows that naturalism, as a way of conceiving the world objectively, is a problem in the sense that the ground of knowledge is bound up with subjectivity of a particular perspective. Subjectivity is, in many regards, something to overcome and transcend for the sake of understanding. However, Nagel shows that even if it was possible to overcome the subjective perspective, naturalism is itself insufficient because it cannot provide an understanding of the world-relation *of* the individual subject. Hence, naturalism cannot, as an external point of view, reflect the human world-relation and embeddedness in the world. Naturalism cannot provide the components required for the orientation of a lived human life.

This last point says that naturalism is a world-model that cannot account for the world-relation. The question of the world, posed as the cosmic question, is posed from within a world that one is a part of and takes part in. Detachment compromises this fundamental condition. Nagel's idea of self-transcendence therefore needs to come to terms with the self and its condition of participation. The world that can answer to the cosmic question needs to be sought through this participation, through attachment and not detachment, through engagement and not disengagement. The cosmic question reflects the condition of embeddedness in the world; any answer can only succeed by including the embedment itself.

From this final exploration of Nagel's cosmic question and the question of embeddedness, it seems obvious that the question of subjectivity needs to be taken up again. If the first-person perspective is an expression of the subjectivity that ultimately defines the world-relation in question, then a notion of the self that pertains to the aspect of world-embedment is needed. In what follows, I therefore turn to an exploration of Charles Taylor's

argues that McDowell's naturalism is incoherent at the conceptual or semantic level, since it confuses what is included and excluded in the notion of nature. Fink, "Three Sorts of Naturalism." I thank my colleague René Rosfort for fruitful discussions on McDowell and his critics.

notion of framework as a theory of engaged selfhood. The question at issue is the question of embeddedness in the world.

4 Frameworks and the Embedded Self

4.1 Framework

Charles Taylor defends a strand of contemporary philosophy that is concerned with selfhood, which Taylor develops from a notion of *embeddedness* and *engaged agency*. Within this agenda, Taylor seeks to broaden the scope of an all too narrow conception of moral philosophy in contemporary thinking. This broadening, in a preliminary sense, consists in exploring what Taylor calls moral ontologies, which are “the background we assume or draw on in any claim to rightness, part of which we have to spell out when we have to defend our responses as the right ones.”¹⁰² This is his background for approaching the question concerning the human self and the reason why Taylor is so difficult to frame as ‘simply’ a moral philosopher (the aspects of his thinking being much broader than that).¹⁰³

Through Taylor’s notion of the self we come to see the significance that selfhood has, not only as a notion of world-directedness, but also as a notion of world-engagement. A central feature of this notion is what Taylor calls *frameworks* or *backgrounds*. It is through these that one expresses and reflects on oneself, that one forms one’s personal predicament for engaging in a community as a moral agent. This is a multifaceted notion of sense-shaping as the determining of the human life in the world. “A framework is that by virtue of which we make sense of our lives spiritually. Not to have a framework is to fall into a life which is spiritually senseless. The quest is thus always a quest for sense.”¹⁰⁴

The notion of framework is fundamental for Taylor. However, it can also be found throughout a heritage of classical thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Merleau-Ponty. Taylor does not disregard the history of this heritage but, in many ways, presents it exemplarily for the benefit of the present discussion. I primarily refer to the exposition that Taylor gives on this concept in the first part of *Sources of the Self* (1989).

Frameworks have to do with meaning in the most fundamental sense. In fact, they pertain to the very possibility of sense. In Taylor’s view, the human self is a self that operates through meaningful encounters and articulations. Whether we address this notion of frameworks from a moral,

¹⁰² Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 9.

¹⁰³ Charles Taylor has contributed to the philosophical discussion of selfhood in contemporary thinking. Ethics, culture, politics and religion are but some of Taylor’s recurring themes, which impregnate and broaden his central concern with human selfhood. Among the many aspects of Taylor’s comprehensive work, this discussion will focus on Taylor’s notion of *frameworks* or *backgrounds* and Taylor’s understanding of embeddedness in the notion of embodied agency.

¹⁰⁴ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 18.

existential, ontological, or logical perspective, the central question concerning the self involves a constitutive relation to its surroundings, which is a relation determined and articulated by the predicaments of the self as an agent, which Taylor calls a background framework. A framework, in Taylor's view, is inescapable. The human being establishes meaning through distinctions of quality, what is worthy of respect and what is desirable. While meaning is found on various levels, the notion of frameworks provides a conception of the human life as the broader frame within which meaning is shaped.

A framework incorporates a crucial set of qualitative distinctions. To think, feel, judge within such a framework is to function with the sense that some action or mode of life, or mode of feeling is incomparable higher than others which are more readily available to us.¹⁰⁵

In this sense, a framework provides tools for the evaluation and the articulation of what is preferred or desired over something else. In the framework lies the expression of what Taylor has called *strong evaluations*.

4.2 Strong Evaluation

In his notion of strong evaluation, Taylor develops Harry Frankfurt's description of the human being as a species that can evaluate its desires and form *second-order desires*.¹⁰⁶ This is a capacity or power of self-evaluation that is characteristic for the mode of agency identified as human. Taylor then distinguishes two sorts of evaluation of desires: *weak* and *strong evaluation*.¹⁰⁷

In the matter of a weak evaluation, an agent is merely concerned with the outcome of his actions. In the matter of a strong evaluation, an agent is, though engaged in reflection at another level, concerned with the qualitative worth of her desires.¹⁰⁸ An example would be when a young healthy person takes a comfortable seat on the bus for the sake of convenience. A simple weak evaluation takes place: I desire to sit, here is a seat, thus I take a seat. In another case, before occupying the last available seat on the bus, I see an elderly fellow passenger who needs a seat. In this latter case, I evaluate the immediate desire to take a seat, but I refrain from carrying out my desire due to the worth of the desire: I refrain from taking the last seat on the bus and potentially causing an elderly passenger great annoyance and discomfort. Whereas weak evaluations concern simple and

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁶ Harry Frankfurt, "Freedom of the Will and the Concept of a Person," *The Journal of Philosophy* 68, no. 1 (1971): 5-20.

¹⁰⁷ See Charles Taylor, "What Is Human Agency?," in *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 15-44.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 16.

immediate desires (sometimes without further consequences), strong evaluations evaluate the value of my desire, which entails a notion of ‘good’ or worth at a higher level against which the quality of an action is measured. I simply decide not to be a rude or disrespectful person who refuses to recognize an elderly person’s greater need for a seat.

In this last aspect lies the idea that the actions derived from strong evaluations concern *what kind of person* I find myself to be or aspire to be. My strong evaluations thereby form a mode of life, as Taylor puts it. However, it is by means of a deeper-lying framework that the ‘sense’ of qualitative distinctions is present. A framework is not necessarily an articulated conscious basis of higher goods or values. “It may be only this; or it can be spelled out in a highly explicit way, in a philosophically formulated ontology or anthropology.”¹⁰⁹ A framework may or may not be articulated, but – and this is a decisive point – for a self, for a human agent, there is always a framework.

4.3 *Naturalism and the Self*

A fundamental aspect of Taylor’s thinking is a critique of what he calls the ‘widespread naturalist temper.’ The implications of naturalism result in a denial of any such theory of frameworks altogether. Nonetheless, this is but one of the characteristics of naturalism that Taylor finds problematic. Primarily, naturalism runs into a highly problematic understanding of agency, one that can be traced back to the cosmological revolution of the 17th century. This notion of agency consists in a disengaged (autonomous, atomic) notion of consciousness that underlies the primacy of epistemology in modern philosophy. This has led to a confused and, in Taylor’s view, mistaken understanding of the self as a punctual self that is not engaged with, but separated from, the world it perceives and lives in.¹¹⁰ Taylor’s critique of naturalistic thinking pertains to the view of the self and of human agency espoused by naturalistic thinking. Moreover, this critique reflects how central human agency is to Taylor’s understanding of the self: the nature of agency defines the self. Naturalism is incapable of formulating or understanding the dimensions of the self as reflected in human agency within a neutrality-aspiring scientific language. Agency is not determined by causal relations, whereas movement is. To act is something different, which implies strong qualitative distinctions and discriminations.

To be a full human agent is to exist in a space defined by distinctions of worth. But it is also to exist in a space of questions from which we seek sufficient answers, answers that we incorporate into our self-understanding.

¹⁰⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 21.

¹¹⁰ See also Taylor, “Overcoming Epistemology,” 7; Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 22.

A self is a being for whom certain questions of categoric value have arisen, and received at least partial answers. Perhaps these have been given authoritatively by culture more than they have been elaborated in the deliberation of the person concerned, but they are his in the sense that they are incorporated into his self-understanding, in some degree and fashion.¹¹¹

The questions we ask are incorporated into our self-understanding along with the qualitative distinctions that we have incorporated into our framework. This feature of self-understanding implies that there can be no absolute understanding of who we are as persons:

A being who exists only in self-interpretation cannot be understood absolutely; and one who can only be understood against the background of distinctions of worth cannot be captured by a scientific language which essentially aspires to neutrality.¹¹²

The background framework provides a language for our self-understanding. In the background framework, we carry the horizons available to our understanding. As a self (a human agent), we *orientate* ourselves according to coordinates and contrastive articulations of worth and qualitative distinctions. The more general point of the notion of framework, however, is that it not only provides the means for the choices and the sense we make of our moral actions, but for the sense we make of experiences in general. Human experiences are formed against the background of a framework. In this sense, there are always conditions of orientation involved in any experience. This feature of orientation is central to the notion of framework and how experiences are shaped to become *our* experiences. Another way to conceive of Taylor's notion of framework can be found in his employment of transcendental arguments.¹¹³ From this side, Taylor's implementation of the notion of frameworks can be illuminated through Taylor's own employment of Merleau-Ponty's notion of 'embodiment' and embodied agency as an orientational structure for the way experiences make sense.¹¹⁴

The point of the notion of embodied agency is that the self-understanding of the perceiver, *as an embodied agent*, provides the

¹¹¹ Charles Taylor, "Introduction," in *Human Agency and Language* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 3.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 3–4.

¹¹³ See Charles Taylor, "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 20–33. Taylor's technical description of transcendental arguments says that they start from a claim about an indubitable feature of experience and infers "a stronger conclusion, one concerning the nature of the subject or the subject's position in the world." Taylor, "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments," 20.

¹¹⁴ See for example Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), 173–179.

orientational structures through which experience is rendered meaningful. This sensitivity to human embodiment, as an example of the fundamental embedment in the world, is essential to Taylor's critique of naturalistic thinking. It is a semantic condition that the naturalistic approach has left out of sight. McDowell's attempt to situate the propositional involvement of the human being in the world brought him to explicate the human mode of living, '*Bildung*', and tradition. In Taylor, this understanding of experience through embodied agency implies that experience is never neutral or pure (as with a physical eye over and against a physical object). Our preoccupation, embedment, and engagement in the world we experience are fundamental. Hence, experience is always meaningful by means of inherent orientational structures that enable and guide whatever sense an experience makes. A good example is the gravitational condition that keeps us bound to the ground. The self-understanding and intimacy with oneself as a bodily agent in a gravitational field provides the coordinates or directionality according to which experiences are rendered meaningful. I comprehend a flying object against the background of my awareness of my own gravitational limits. It is in this way that I can relate to something as flying.

Another example is the perception of a chair: the distinct way in which a chair makes sense, to and for me, depends on the condition that I am a being which uses a chair and am familiar with chairs through a certain practice. I might be able to recognize a comfortable chair due to my intimate sense of my physical conditions and my experiences around chairs. When a perception of a chair makes sense to me, it does so at a fundamental level, because I am aware of the properties and proportions of chairs as suited for my own physical constitution and my frequent desire to rest my legs. In other words, my bodily constitution provides me with a set of proportions that gives me a standard with which I meet my surroundings. As Taylor puts it, "our perceptual field has the structure it has because it is experienced as a field of potential action."¹¹⁵ Neither dualistic subject-object settings nor mechanistic models can replace the orientational structures formed by the self-understanding of an agent as an embodied agent.

The notion of framework applies to all sense. The decisive point in Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodiment is that in order to be able to make sense of an object as an object, one draws on orientational markers provided by one's own constitution as a bodily agent that can move and act around objects; an intimacy with the proportions and dimensions of a spatio-temporal gravitational space is what enables the recognition of a given object as an object.

¹¹⁵ Taylor, "The Validity of Transcendental Arguments," 24.

4.4 Identity and Orientation

Aside from the question concerning the meaning of the inventory of our immediate surroundings, a framework or a background picture also plays a role in the broader scope of our lives regarding what makes them meaningful or fulfilling. In our life among other people we explicate the sense of our moral responses through the articulation of our framework which serves to explicate the meaning of our actions. In this respect, it should be clear that one's framework in no way sets one apart from the broader social engagement. Frameworks are something we share. Our co-existence succeeds in virtue of the framework we have in common. It does not construct an isolated individuality but maintains one's capacities for social interaction. Our background understandings are therefore shared and taken over, much like social norms. Societies are, in large part, defined by the norms and ideals they share. Likewise, the framework reflects one's social belonging, loyalty, and the fundamental ideas of what is good and worth striving for – the complete framework in which life matters and has meaning. Consequently, these factors are not separate from one's framework, but descriptive of how one's framework works. Moreover, the background framework is the most fundamental level of understanding that one has of oneself. Naturally, the framework, and the meaning articulated from it, also works as a means for the development of personal identity. This is

the essential link between identity and a kind of orientation. To know who you are is to be orientated in moral space, a space in which questions about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary.¹¹⁶

Identity is shaped by a plethora of background assumptions that cannot be listed as a complete set of properties, but instead take the form of a personal identity as a grasping and projection of 'who I am'. In this way, my strong evaluations are inseparable from who I am. My strong evaluations cannot simply be left aside as theoretical moral questions, but are tied up with the expression and self-identification of me as a personal agent. Responsibility, in this sense, can be said to be responsibility to my own identity and integrity before anyone else.¹¹⁷ Taylor says, "our existence as persons, and hence our ability to adhere as persons to certain evaluations, would be impossible outside the horizon of these essential

¹¹⁶ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 28.

¹¹⁷ "An identity is something that one ought to be true to, can fail to uphold, can surrender when one ought to. More fundamentally, we can see that it only plays the role of orienting us, of providing the frame within which things have meaning for us, by virtue of the qualitative distinctions it incorporates." Ibid., 30.

evaluations, that we would break down as persons, be incapable of being persons in the full sense.”¹¹⁸

To talk about orientation, Taylor says, presupposes that we are engaged with our framework such as to find meaning through a proper orientation. The ontological implication of this locates the human being in what Taylor calls *a space of questions*,¹¹⁹ in which we move and operate “as we seek and find an orientation to the good.”¹²⁰ These questions are questions concerning the good, and it is our framework that enables an articulation of our orientation in this space of questions about the good. Our orientation is therefore fragile. It consists of “contestable answers to inescapable questions.”¹²¹ The conditions for our identity do not enable an exhaustive static answer to the question of who we are. We are always *changing* and *becoming*.

Since we cannot do without an orientation to the good, and since we cannot be indifferent to our place relative to this good, and since this place is something that must always change and become, the issue of the direction of our lives must arise for us.¹²²

Our sense of orientation towards the good, our self-understanding, is best understood as an unfolding story, a narrative.¹²³ This narrative is constitutive of the space of questions, as the answers provided by a coherent narrative. This narrative self-relation opens up a historical dimension in which identity is understood through a development leading up to a *now* which further projects a possible future.

The sort of engagement defended by Taylor deploys an argument against the idea of detachment and neutrality which shows that a neutral stance toward things (what Nagel calls objectivity) is only possible against the background of a pre-reflective engagement as a way of modifying our more fundamental involvement with things.

Neutrality conflicts with the fundamental condition of engaged selfhood: The self is engaged in whatever is made sense of. Sense is sense to a self. As a philosophy of engaged selfhood, Taylor’s notion of frameworks reads the question about the world (indeed, any question) as a question to a self to whom a sufficient answer makes sense in virtue of a framework. Even though subjectivity is an inescapable condition, the human being is not an isolated animal but a social animal in the sense that one’s framework

¹¹⁸ Taylor, “What Is Human Agency?,” 34–35.

¹¹⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 29.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹²¹ Ibid., 41.

¹²² Ibid., 47.

¹²³ Ibid. Taylor mentions a few of the more broadly known explorations of narrative identity provided by thinkers such as Heidegger, Ricoeur, McIntyre and Bruner.

reflects one's social intertwinement. One is involved in social and cultural negotiations where many answers are a form of participating in social exchanges that influence our meaning-making and reasoning. Naturalistic thinking is itself established against a background and implies certain framework features. Taylor's critical claim is that naturalism denies this, or makes this denial a fundamental and necessary condition.

4.5 *Initiary Considerations*

The discussion of the cosmic question has brought many interesting aspects to the fore and has found a basis for discerning at least two different ways of understanding what is asked for in the concern with the world: On the one side, we have the world as an object, we could say a world with an objective determination and closure; and on the other side, we have the world in the form of a meaningful environment of the embedded self. The first understanding is characterized by a theoretical view of the world and, in Nagel's view, an external reality: the world as something you determine in itself and refer to as an independent object. The second understanding of the world is characterized as something you find yourself partaking in, living in, and in that sense *in-habiting*. The world thereby has no object character, but becomes the background against which objects are available to us, as objects of a world. Taylor's idea of background frameworks provides a notion of the latter. Nagel, McDowell, and Taylor all contribute to uncovering the difference between these two understandings of the world. However, both Nagel and McDowell take these different perspectives to be inherent to our way of experiencing, and are therefore required to respond to an external reality.

The central issue is 'the question of the world.' In terms of religious orientation, as Nagel's describes it with the *religious temper*, the issue is that of integrating a "conception of the universe and your relation to it into your life."¹²⁴ With this, Nagel seeks to find a way of speaking of the world that reflects the world-relation that motivates the question. If the cosmic question, with which Nagel reflects upon religion, is a concern with one's relation to the world, then the world that one asks for depends on the possibility of including that which relates to the world, as well as the relation itself. The attempt to translate Nagel's cosmic question into the question of a first-person cosmology was an attempt to describe this aspect of the cosmic question.

For Nagel, the world-relation is our subjectivity, defined as an internal perspective that, on the one hand, seeks to respond to an external world, and, on the other hand, seeks to come to terms with its own subjective condition. For Taylor, however, the understanding of subjectivity is

¹²⁴ Nagel, "Secular Philosophy and the Religious Temperament," 5.

different. The world-relation is understood as an engagement through which things make sense. The world is not an 'external world', but the background against which things make sense. Moving from Nagel to Taylor, we came to speak of the world in a different way, which is reflected in two different models of subjectivity. For Nagel, subjectivity is a challenge to the attempt to understand the world as it is in itself. For Taylor, however, the world consists in the framework that underlies the sense that is present to the subject. The embeddedness asserted by Taylor does not repond to an outer reality, but determines the conditions of actual meaning.

Let us recapitulate.

We reconsidered Nagel's idea of naturalism as an option for the cosmic question (3.1, 3.2). This was initially a question of religion and how religion reflects a concern with the world. In this regard, the position of religious naturalism proved insufficient in relating the religious and the real. Religious naturalism, in the varieties presented, cannot therefore provide a basis for answering the cosmic question.

We reconsidered the notion of naturalism (3.3, 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6) in order to find out if the human concern with the world could be incorporated into a different naturalism, a revised and liberal naturalism. McDowell proposes such a liberal naturalism by means of a broader concept of nature that seems to change the context of the problem. The merit of the distinction of logical spaces is a re-enchantment of the world due to the primacy of the question of meaning. But what world? Not a naturalistic world. There is no exchange of meaning *between* the realm of laws and the space of reasons, which makes naturalism irrelevant to a human concern. Nevertheless, we achieved a preliminary notion of the possibilities available through an improved notion of selfhood and, consequently, a different notion of the world. Since Nagel, the question of subjectivity has followed the discussion of the cosmic question as a central premise of thinking the world from the world-relation in which the question is formulated. McDowell took us part of the way, by pointing to 'the human mode of being' as an independent space of meaning-shaping. This independency, however, made McDowell's claim of a naturalism questionable. He might claim that second nature is part of first nature, but he does not show what that means in praxis. What is therefore required is a different approach to the question of the world.

We turned to Taylor who presents a notion of engaged selfhood as the notion of the human world-relation (chapter 4). He examines this relation through the concepts of engaged agency and the notion of background framework. This offered an opportunity for reconsidering the question of subjectivity with regard to the notion of embeddedness. We are engaged with the things we are surrounded by. To Taylor that means that the world comes into view by means of a framework of our engagement (e.g.

embodiment) that provides the meaningful encounter with our surroundings. There are no direct ontological claims presented by Taylor, besides his notion of framework. Taylor thereby turns against any claim to respond in any particular way to an external, fixed, 'outer' world outside of the framework-condition. The world we live in takes its form in the relation that one always already has in the human way of inhabiting its world. The notion of background framework is therefore better suited to recognizing the fundamental premise of a world-relation.

With respect to the question of the world, the discussion of these first chapters has reflected that the world is something that always includes us. The question of subjectivity as it relates to the initial idea of a religious temper has only initially been explored in the feature of orientation. It remains to provide a more complete picture of this.

4.6 Determining and Inhabiting the World

Before we leave this discussion, I want to point out a few more aspects concerning Taylor's position and potential for reflections on human selfhood. Taylor's thinking is equipped with a Heideggerian heritage, not only with regard to the idea of engaged agency, but in the very idea of *engagement* as the fundamental characterization of the human world-relation. In its broad sense, the notion of engagement establishes the point that "the world of the agent is shaped by his or her form of life, or history, or bodily existence."¹²⁵ I have called this embeddedness. It implies that whatever is assumed to be an object of our understanding is something that we are always already engaged with. Engagement, for example in the form of embodiment, provides a background of understanding as a context of a space of intelligibility, within which experiences are intelligible. Taylor calls it a "context conferring intelligibility."¹²⁶ Not only are we conditioned by our embodiment, but also by our language. We have certain pre-developed resources for articulating an experience through our language; this language is itself developed through past experiences. Our experiences are shaped intelligibly, and are colored through many different features of

¹²⁵ Charles Taylor, "Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger," in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon (Cambridge [England]; New York USA: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

¹²⁶ "Our embodiment makes our experience of space as oriented up-down understandable. In this relation the first term, the form of agency (embodiment), stands to the second (our experience), as a context conferring intelligibility... The context stands as the unexplicit horizon within which – or to vary the image, as the vantage point out of which – this experience can be understood." Charles Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels Between Heidegger and Wittgenstein," in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 68.

our human life that all count as conditions for our understanding of new experiences.

Taylor stresses the importance of embeddedness because the dominant rationalist view of the self provides us with a model of ourselves as disengaged thinkers.¹²⁷ Taylor refers to Nagel's notion of objectivity as a sort of thinking that seeks to overcome and escape "the distortions and parochial perspectives of our kind of subjectivity, and grasps the world as it is."¹²⁸ In the context of modern rationalism, embodied experience, that is, subjective experience, was taken to be potentially misleading. The distinction made between primary and secondary properties by the seventeenth century thinkers (e.g. Locke) served to determine illusory impressions of understanding from correct ones, concerning the question of whether it was properties located in the objects or produced in the perceiving mind. Consequently, objectivity was reached through an overcoming of immediate impressions. The goal of this 'rationalistic detachment' was to place the perception in an undistorted position where things could be conceived as they are in themselves.

One of Taylor's central objections lies in this idea of things as intelligible *in themselves*, and that sensational impressions can be understood as mere transfers of bits of information: that is, the idea that intelligibility is assumed from the start, and it does not need a context to provide it. It is understood that the bits of information are taken as such from the beginning and that the operations that follow amount to a processing of that information.¹²⁹

This rationalist model has to a large extent become common sensical, often taken for granted, and it is Taylor's ambition to confront and revoke this refusal of the most intimate impressions, and the neglect of the human embeddedness in the world we make sense of. In Taylor's own attempt to marshal arguments against the widespread employment of the rationalist model, he points to Heidegger and Wittgenstein, both of whom played crucial roles in the formulation of such arguments. This was accomplished through an exploration of different notions of the conditions of intelligibility.

The notion of embodiment, as introduced with Merleau-Ponty's notion of embodied agency, draws on aspects of Heidegger's understanding of

¹²⁷ Taylor's account of modern intellectual history points out a reflexive turn of modern rationalism in which the idea that reason is the faculty that connects us to the order of the universe as the true ground of reason was given up. "In its theoretical employment, reason serves to build a picture of the world. Rationality requires that we scrutinize this building closely, and not let our view of things just form itself distractedly, or self-indulgently, or following the prejudices of our day." *Ibid.*, 64.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹²⁹ Taylor, "Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger," 214.

being-in-the-world. This, as Heidegger presents it in *Being and Time* (1927), designates embeddedness as a way of relating to things in one's surrounding environment. A central Heideggerian conceptual distinction that depicts this familiarity is that between 'present-at-hand' (*Vorhandensein*) and 'ready-to-hand' (*Zuhandensein*). Heidegger's concepts frame the sort of understanding of things that we have by means of our practical familiarity with them. Engagement, understood as a present-at-hand, is an intimate understanding of things, in Heidegger's formulation a pre-understanding (*Vor-habe*). Due to engagement, we are never in contact with things on 'pure' or blank-sheet conditions, but disclose them within a coherent conception of the world. Understanding always takes form through connections of impressions, experiences, and familiarity that we have – what Heidegger conceived as our getting-around-in-the-world. Heidegger means that we operate within a familiarity with things as we get around with them, e.g. in the way we use them. The basic idea is that our experience is shaped by certain conditions, for example our bodily predicament.¹³⁰

When Heidegger speaks of the world, he deploys a central idea of Kant's transcendental thinking.¹³¹ Kant's investigation of sensual impressions is concerned with the special character of impressions that they are *about* something. This, Kant argues, can only be established through a

¹³⁰ Taylor further clarifies the sort of awareness implied in our conditions of intelligibility by emphasizing that while we are not thinking about our conditions of intelligibility as we make experiences, we could bring them to our attention if we wanted – at least in part. Our articulation of our background framework “makes intelligible what I am uncontestably aware of; but at the same time I cannot be said to be explicitly or focally aware of it, because that status is already occupied by what it is making intelligible.” *Ibid.*, 210. The idea of articulating the background is not meant as an objective description of the background. The articulation of the background *also* needs the background to succeed, which means there is no point outside the background from which to approach the background.

¹³¹ Heidegger's comprehensive work, and especially his concept of world (“Welt”/Welt) as presented in *Sein und Zeit* (primarily §12-27), reflects many aspects that cohere more with the questions of this study than can actually be considered. The ability to discuss Heidegger in relation to the positions presented in this chapter outside the scope of this study. I limit myself in this study to minor remarks, but primarily leave Heidegger's own work aside. Besides the question of engagement, the central Heideggerian influence on Taylor lies in Taylor's critique of naturalism and the naturalistic conception of the world in modern rationality. Heidegger presents these thoughts in various texts, but more thoroughly in his direct discussions on modern technology, especially in “*Die Frage nach der Technik*.” Another illuminating expression of Heidegger's ideas is his Bremen-lectures from 1949 “*Die Frage nach dem Ding*” and “*Das Ge-Stell*” Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe Bd. 79: Bremer und Freiburger Vorträge*, 2nd ed. (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 2005).

fundamental relation of our knowledge to the object of the impression.¹³² The 'aboutness' of the impression, and its determinate character, depends on a context of relations in which the object of impression gains its determination, as a position, that it is an impression of a thing in the world. The object of impression has to be determined in relations to other things from which it can be distinguished. If I cannot determine the object of impression through its relations to other things, then it would be completely indeterminate for me. The determination of an object of impression through its differences from and similarities to other things (a context of constitutive relations) is, in Kant's argument, only possible due to a *unity of the world* that one has to presume in order for anything to present itself as something determinate. We could also say that to determine something is to place it within a context of relations to other things. Heidegger's application of this Kantian idea leads to the idea that things are disclosed both through a world and as part of a world: the world is something *through* which things have their being for us. The world that goes before and enables the disclosure of things designates our engagement and embeddedness in our environment.

Taylor's application of this idea of 'world', as the framework that provides the context of intelligibility and the sense we make of our experiences, emphasizes the plasticity of the world: the world is a contestable framework that we shape in negotiations of either social ways or ways of responding to big questions. There is never a static or resting world that provides us with sense, but a dialectic motion between our self-awareness and situations we are presented with. Taylor therefore asserts that "World shaping is a matter of sense making."¹³³ The fact that things make sense to us is due to our embeddedness, to our being-in-the-world – Heidegger calls it the '*Lichtung*' (clearing). Decisively, it is not a subject-centered idea of the world, but the idea that we in our world-shaping and our articulation of our world respond to something which is not ourselves.¹³⁴ It is not the external world, reality, or anything that can be

¹³² This idea of a necessary relation of knowledge to its objects (Von der Beziehung aller Erkenntnis auf ihren Gegenstand, Immanuel Kant, Kritik der reinen Vernunft (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1998), A104.) is later called 'intentionality', and it is also a central concern in McDowell's discussion in *Mind and World*.

¹³³ Taylor, "Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger," 213. While Heidegger's notion of '*Lichtung*', in parallel to Wittgenstein's notion of '*Lebenswelt*', has inspired Taylor's charge against the detachment of the self in widespread modern rationality, Heidegger and Taylor can be held apart when it comes to ethics. While Heidegger never engaged directly with ethical questions in his approach to ontology (as he understood it), Taylor's conception of 'moral ontologies' puts the question of strong evaluation and constitutive goods at the centre of his approach to the self.

¹³⁴ Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels Between Heidegger and Wittgenstein," 77.

articulated within our framework, but simply the brute fact that our framework is responding to a fundamental facticity. In modern thinking, this is the idea that has been framed as ‘the decentered self.’

As we move on to the next part that is concerned with Schelling’s notion of personhood, the questions of this discussion will not be forgotten. Through this discussion, we have provided our approach to Schelling with markers of contemporary positions that enable us to assess Schelling’s notion of the human being as embedded in the world, and furthermore to consider Schelling’s potential for a notion of religious orientation – something which we will do in Part III, in discussion with Dalferth’s philosophy of religion.

PART II

Schelling's Notion of Personhood

5 Schelling and Post-Kantian Idealism

5.1 Introduction

The following exploration of F.W.J. Schelling's thinking aims at an interpretation of the notion of personhood found in his later thought.¹³⁵ Personhood pertains to an ontological situation in which Schelling exploits the philosophical components of his later ontology, which is an *ontology of freedom*. The systematic reconstruction of personhood aims to show the composition of human embeddedness in the world insofar as it pertains to the questions raised in part one: how does the human being relate to the world, and how is that relation formative of the world?

Schelling is not an unusual historical figure to address. The influence of his later thought can be traced through various 19th and 20th-century traditions such as phenomenology, existentialism and psycho-analysis. Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Sartre and many others were influenced, inspired, and provoked by the gravity of Schelling's insights concerning the tasks and challenges of modern philosophy. Moreover, his more recent reception, especially in the Anglo-American world, shows the compatibility of his thinking with debates in contemporary philosophy.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Schelling's thinking takes several developmental steps around which there has been a lot of dispute. I find it to be an important trait of Schelling that he never directly abandons any of his earlier positions; instead he continuously seeks to reformulate, rearrange, re-integrate, re-situate or re-interpret his former works. As mentioned in the introduction, my overall orientation in Schelling's development is guided by Theunissen's thesis of three distinct approaches of Schelling: an *egological* approach, which he assigns to Schelling's early thinking; an *anthropological* approach, which he assigns to his middle period (e.g. *Freiheitsschrift* and fragment of the *Ages of the World*); and finally an *onto-theological* approach, which he assigns to Schelling's later thinking. My concern with Schelling's notion of personhood seeks to understand its central formulations in the middle period against the background of the onto-theological framework of his later period. I tie these two late approaches together and refer to them as the 'mature' or simply 'late' thinking. What I refer to as Schelling's *ontology of freedom* covers this tie. Michael Theunissen, "Schellings anthropologischer ansatz," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 47, no. 1–3 (1965): 174–189.

¹³⁶ See for example Edward Beach, *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994); Andrew Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy: An Introduction* (London; New York:

A re-application of Schelling's thought is neither sufficient nor what I intend to do here. Instead, my interest in Schelling relates directly to the question of the world, particularly as it pertains to the question of orientation. From the later Schelling, I seek to extract a theory of human embeddedness that situates the question of the world in a notion of personhood. Hence, the following study of Schelling's thinking seeks to illuminate his notion of personhood through the question of human conditions of orientation as embedded and, as such, determined by the world. In Schelling's multifaceted contribution to these matters, we find the human being explored not only in its characteristic as an *autonomous* being, but also as an *ontonomous* being, that is, in the way it is determined through being.

For the late Schelling, the question of being is the question of the world. The human being is engaged and participating in being because being is affirmed at the level of the world-relation. In light of this, we can say that being is determined by meaning. However, the thinking subject is taken to be a part of the world of objects and is not placed outside of it. There *are*, as a fact, meaningful impressions of reality as something given. By the given I mean that there are meaningful appearances in the form of a phenomenal world. This implies that whatever there is must (at least to some degree) be compatible with the procedure of being grasped by thought. This procedure, so Schelling, is itself a part of whatever there is. There *are* thoughts about the world. For Schelling, this means that thoughts about the world are themselves part of the world. This is due to the fact that thoughts derive from a free, but also embedded, thinking subject that exists *in the world*. What Schelling aims at is a radical integration of epistemology into ontology, which implies that being consists of objects qua objects of thought. In all this, personhood designates the thinking human being.

Schelling's notion of personhood is a renewed notion of the thinking subject and it derives from his later ontology. He developed this through a

Routledge, 1993); Bernard Freydsberg, *Schelling's Dialogical Freedom Essay: Provocative Philosophy Then and Now* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008); David Krell, *The Tragic Absolute: German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Bruce Matthews, *Schelling's Organic Form of Philosophy: Life as the Schema of Freedom* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2011); Dale Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996); Jason Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life: Meditations on Schelling and His Time* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2003); Jason Wirth, *Schelling Now: Contemporary Readings* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Alistair Welchman and Judith Norman, eds., *The New Schelling* (New York; London: Continuum, 2004); Slavoj Žizek, *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters* (London; New York: Verso, 1996).

critique of rational immanentist thinking, which is represented both in his own philosophical tradition of post-Kantian idealism as well as within the broader tradition of onto-theological metaphysics (running [at least] from Plato to Spinoza). My presentation of Schelling's notion of personhood must therefore be understood in the context of Schelling's mature ontology. The philosophical value of the notion of personhood depends on the possibility of a valid and useful reconstruction of its systematic role in such a context. At a certain point in Schelling's thinking, he initiates a development or reformulation of his earlier thinking in a reinforced critique of purely rationalistic thinking such as that found in Spinoza and Hegel. What changes in his development towards the grounding of a new philosophy, a positive philosophy, must be understood through his analysis and critique of the logical immanence in negative philosophy, that is, purely rational philosophy.

In regard to the discussion in Part I, we can assume that the central aspects of Schelling's ontology somehow enable a transformation of dichotomies from an epistemological setup, such as subject-object and mind-world constellations. Conceiving of Schelling's employment of his notion of personhood requires that we reassess these dichotomies from within the standpoint of idealistic thinking. If the question of orientation can be sought in structures of embeddedness and features of movement rather than one-dimensional structures of flat causation and representation, then we have a broader and far more suitable basis for understanding what embeddedness means for an understanding of the human self. It is my claim that Schelling's notion of personhood provides such a basis.

Schelling achieved the turn that led to his mature ontology through the question of freedom as the way of relating the noumenal and the phenomenal. His ontology is an *ontology of freedom* whose central ambition is to show "that everything real (nature, the world of things) has *activity, life and freedom* as its ground."¹³⁷ More precisely, Schelling

¹³⁷ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 22. My italics. Schelling is from the outset of his approach to freedom in critical dialogue with both Kant and Fichte as the context of this quote from the *Freiheitsschrift* clearly shows: "es wird vielmehr gefordert, auch umgekehrt zu zeigen, daß alles Wirkliche (die Natur, die Welt der Dinge) Thätigkeit, Leben und Freiheit zum Grund habe, oder im Fichteschen Ausdruck, daß nicht allein die Ichheit alles, sondern auch umgekehrt alles Ichheit sey. Der Gedanke, die Freiheit einmal zum Eins und Alles der Philosophie zu machen [...]. Nur wer Freiheit gekostet hat, kann das Verlangen empfinden, ihr alles analog zu machen, sie über das ganze Universum zu verbreiten. [...] Es wird aber immer merkwürdig bleiben, daß Kant, nachdem er zuerst Dinge an sich von Erscheinungen nur negativ, durch die Unabhängigkeit von der Zeit, unterschieden, nachher in den metaphysischen Erörterungen seiner Kritik der praktischen Vernunft Unabhängigkeit von der Zeit und Freiheit wirklich als correlate Begriffe behandelt hatte, nicht zu dem Gedanken fortging, diesen einzig möglichen positiven Begriff des An-sich auch auf die Dinge überzutragen,

slowly initiated this ontology of freedom in the years leading up to his famous *Freiheitsschrift* in 1809. From that point on, Schelling was dedicated to the project of “making freedom the one and all of philosophy.”¹³⁸ In the context of this development, and its concern with freedom, anthropology came to play a decisive role.¹³⁹ What Schelling has in mind with his notion of personhood covers more than theoretical subjectivity. It is a more full human ground of reality as also indicated with *activity, life*, but ultimately designated *freedom*.

Schelling’s critical move drove him beyond the limits of a logical concept of being, to a new concept of being that we can characterize as *historical* and *contingent*. It is in this context that Schelling introduces a notion of personhood, a notion that explicitly gives expression to the conditions of the unity of being and thought. Personhood is therefore not an anthropological issue independent from the question of being, but has its place directly *in* the question of being. Before we can move to the notion of personhood we must therefore form an idea of the ontological context.

5.2 Post-Kantian Metaphysics

Classical German philosophy, often referred to as *German Idealism*, took place in the fifty year period from the publication of Kant’s first critique in 1781 to Hegel’s death in 1831. The foundation for Schelling’s philosophy (together with Fichte and Hegel) was Kant’s program of critical thinking. What Kant had started, developed into a modern kind of metaphysical thinking that was, on the one hand, idealistic in the way Kant could be said to be idealistic and, on the other hand, metaphysical in a way made possible only by Kant (albeit in a manner that Kant never pursued himself). Hence, due to the ambiguous relation to Kant, it seems more accurate to designate this tradition *post-Kantian idealism*.

Even though post-Kantian idealists moved far beyond the scope of Kant’s thinking, especially his critique of metaphysics, they did so by means of the fundamental principles established by Kant’s transcendental program. “They all believed themselves to be true Kantians,” as Dieter

wodurch er sich unmittelbar zu einem höhern Standpunkt der Betrachtung und über die Negativität erhoben hätte, die der Charakter seiner theoretischen Philosophie ist.” *SW*, VII 352f.

¹³⁸ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 22; *SW*, VII 352.

¹³⁹ On the anthropological aspects of Schelling’s late thought see Jörg Jantzen and Peter L. Oesterreich, *Schellings philosophische Anthropologie* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002); Jochem Hennigfeld, “Die Menschlichkeit des Absoluten,” in *Philosophische Anthropologie im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Friedhelm Decher and Jochem Hennigfeld (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1991), 37-50; Thomas Buchheim and Friedrich Hermann, eds., “*Alle Persönlichkeit ruht auf einem dunklen Grunde*”: *Schellings Philosophie der Personalität* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 2004).

Henrich puts it.¹⁴⁰ They never turned directly against or away from what Kant had initiated with the *Critique of Pure Reason*; rather, they moved on as Kantians who knew that the conditions of possibility for doing philosophy needed to be incorporated into philosophy as such. Post-Kantian idealists knew more than anyone the extent to which Kant's monumental philosophy had changed the conditions for doing philosophy. In their view, metaphysics had become possible in a new way that was not within Kant's interests of formulating a philosophical science. Hence, the new tenets that characterize the post-Kantians reveal a shift of interests.

Kant's critique of metaphysics promoted arguments concerning the impossibility of accounting for the totality of noumenal reality. At the same time, Kant underlined that the problems of metaphysics, as well as the nature of metaphysics, lies in human reason as a natural disposition.¹⁴¹ The ambition of metaphysical thinking to seek an account for the totality of noumenal reality is natural, yet impossible, and it builds upon an illusion. Nevertheless, this illusion is where philosophy begins. The illusion of metaphysics can only be exposed through a procedure of refinement of reason. Hence, philosophy does not begin with truth. It is only because there is an original metaphysics that there can be a critique of metaphysics. This point gives rise to a new understanding of the task of philosophy and of the post-Kantian ambition to re-think metaphysics and to do this from a new level, a meta-perspective. The meta-perspective on metaphysics became itself the progress of metaphysical thinking.

From its concern with accounts of ultimate reality, philosophy must turn its focus to the history of the illusions of philosophy, to the history of metaphysics.¹⁴² Decisively, post-Kantian idealists inherited this Kantian

¹⁴⁰ Dieter Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel: Lectures on German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 31. Manfred Frank elaborates "Die Philosophie, so war Schellings Überzeugung, hat mit Kant einen ungeheuren Schritt nach vorn getan; zugleich war ein Reflexionsniveau definiert, hinter das nicht zurückfallen durfte, wer seinerseits sich anheischig machen wollte, Kant zu überbieten. Und eben das war Schellings Anspruch." Manfred Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie*, 2. ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), 25.

¹⁴¹ The statement from the introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason* says: "For human reason, without being moved by the mere vanity of knowing it all, inexorably pushes on, driven by its own need to such questions that cannot be answered by any experiential use of reason and of principles borrowed from such a use; and thus a certain sort of metaphysics has actually been present in all human beings as soon as reason has extended itself to speculation in them, and it will also always remain there. And now about this too the question is: How is metaphysics as a natural predisposition possible?" Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Paul Guyer and Allen W Wood (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), B21–22.

¹⁴² Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 29–45. "Before there can be an insight that there is some illusion in this metaphysics, there has first to be an original metaphysics.

turn: to account for the necessary occurrence of illusions about noumenal reality for the possibility of the emergence of truth as the primary task of philosophy. By unearthing the systematic structure of reason, philosophy would become able to see through the illusion of metaphysics. Behind the metaphysical illusions, the principles of reason are revealed in their a priori reality. The central aims were therefore to ‘see through’ the “illusion that keeps metaphysics in a state where no progress is possible”, “to develop a pure complete system of all metaphysical statements and proofs” and “offer a complete system of all ontological concepts that are used in metaphysics.”¹⁴³ In this sense, idealists took the task of philosophy to be a translation of the ontological system of metaphysics into the complete system of reason.

Kant’s arguments for the ‘transcendental illusions’ were crucial to the post-Kantian’s way of doing metaphysics. The whole idea of a noumenal world was therefore transformed in light of these fundamental traits of reason. The world was no longer approached as an object isolated from our thoughts about it. The idea of such a world is an illusory but necessary construction, a *regulative idea* that supports the form of experience we both have and possibly can have. Along this line of thought, we can speak of an integration of epistemology into ontology, which implies a genuine focus on being as something determined by the conditions of thinking. The nature of objects was therefore explored *as objects of thought*.

The concept of being is taken out of a representationalist setting. The subject-object encounter is constitutive of being in the encounter itself. The world cannot be understood as something preceding the encounter, but only as the subject-object unity, as the given. Thoughts about the world therefore belong to the world. According to this transcendental ontology, the thinking subject must be conceived both *within* and as *a part* of the world of objects *qua* objects of thought. The meaningful character of the given implies that the given (at least to some extent) is compatible with the procedure of being grasped by thought. By integrating the appearance of the given and the conditions under which the given appears to thought – its *phenomenalization* – into being, the ontological gap between being and thought dissolves. Hence, “*thoughts about the way the world is are themselves a way the world is.*”¹⁴⁴

Only then can one start on the program of critical philosophy. Because, in his view [Kant’s], one cannot get to the truth all at once at the beginning, there are necessary stages of the development of philosophy.” Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 32. See also the section ‘The Logic of Illusion’ in Roger Scruton, *Kant: A Very Short Introduction*, Rev. ed. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 54–72.

¹⁴³ Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 32.

¹⁴⁴ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, xii.

This radical conception of the unity of being and thought was a central feature of the ontology of post-Kantians. As Kant had argued, this unity is established by the self-consciousness by means of which an object is an object only within the constitutive relation of self-consciousness to the content of thought.¹⁴⁵

The heritage of Kant formed this new sort of transcendental metaphysics. As much as transcendental thinking changes the way in which metaphysics is done, it remains metaphysics to the extent that it pursues a determination of the whole, a theory of totality. If metaphysics can rightfully be understood as a *reaching out to the whole* that seeks to determine *what* the whole is, then we can indeed speak of idealism as a metaphysical tradition.¹⁴⁶ However, what changes is the *way* in which idealists approach and conceive of 'the whole.' At the transcendental level, the idea of the whole has transformed into reflections on the ontological conditions for the conditions of access to what there is. Idealists seek to incorporate these conditions of access to being *into being*.

After Kant, metaphysical thinking itself became the object of metaphysics. The central component became the thinking subject and the conditions of reason. Despite all of Kant's comprehensive analysis of the work of reason, he presupposed the existence of the thinking subject as a fact and never really accounted for its existence as such.¹⁴⁷ Regardless of the fundamental importance of the thinking subject, Kant's strict separation of ontology and transcendental philosophy made him refrain from exploring the ontological existence of the thinking subject. However, for idealists, reality is understood as something in which the existing, thinking subject is a central part. Moreover, the thinking subject is not merely an inherent part, it is the essential part. It is reason's inevitable vantage point. Metaphysics has therefore come to center on the actual existence of the thinking subject and the question about what kind of world gives rise to such a subject.¹⁴⁸

The metaphysics of post-Kantian idealists derives from the ontological implications of the actual existence of the thinking subject, in which *being*

¹⁴⁵ "Das: *Ich denke*, muß alle meine Vorstellungen begleiten können; denn sonst würde etwas in mir vorgestellt werden, was gar nicht gedacht werden könnte, welches eben so viel heißt als: die Vorstellung würde entweder unmöglich, oder wenigstens für mich nichts sein." *KrV*, B131f.

¹⁴⁶ See the discussion on the metaphysical character of post-Kantian idealism in Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ See Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie*, 39ff.

¹⁴⁸ Gabriel says: "The subject with its conceptual capacities actually exists; it is part of the world. Therefore the question arises: what conditions have to be fulfilled by being (the world) in order for it to appear to finite thinkers who in turn change the structure of what there is by referring to it?" Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, ix.

and *appearance* are no longer separated as distinct aspects. *Phenomenalization* means that the appearance of being is conceived as being. It is being's way of being being. Being is radically understood as the given, as what gives rise to givenness as such. Being consists in its own appearing; to wit, being is constituted in the very feature of appearing.

How can we, at least preliminarily, characterize this notion of being? To anticipate one of the points to be developed in the course of this chapter: being lies in the moment of *intelligibility* and through the feature of making sense. When reason is understood as the unity of being and thought it means that reason is the form of being through which it *makes sense*. Being does not represent something that is more real, or really real, like a 'thing in itself.' What is given is intelligible, comprehensible, meaningful, and makes sense. Whatever the conditions for sense could be said to be, they are fulfilled in givenness. Hence, the unity of being and thought is manifest in givenness.

The idea of the given reflects the implication that objects are not objects independent of the way they make sense *as* objects. Additionally, the world (to which these objects belong), the reality of all there is, is not independent from the (illusory) ways in which it has been understood. At both levels we find a radical unity of thought and being.

5.3 Knowledge and Nature

In his first Critique, Kant established that reason reaches beyond itself towards a *totality of the whole*. This anticipation of the world in its totality, *omnitudo realitas*, is a transcendental idea that motivates, guides, and supports the constitution of knowledge. It provides reason with a unity of totality as a background that enables the faculty of understanding for grasping anything at all. However, this unity also provides a systematic form of knowledge.¹⁴⁹

The totality of the world is an inexorable *transcendence*, which is the fundamental condition that enables and motivates the work of reason. The only guarantee of systematic unity lies in this transcendence that precedes the constitution of any object of knowledge, any application of predicates,

¹⁴⁹ Kant says, "Übersehen wir unsere Verstandeserkenntnisse in ihrem ganzen Umfange, so finden wir, daß dasjenige, was Vernunft ganz eigentümlich darüber verfügt und zu Stande zu bringen sucht, das *Systematische* der Erkenntnis sei, d.i. der Zusammenhang derselben aus einem Prinzip. Diese Vernunftseinheit setzt jederzeit eine Idee voraus, nämlich die von der Form eines Ganzen der Erkenntnis, welches *vor* der bestimmten Erkenntnis der Teile vorhergeht und die Bedingungen enthält, jedem Teile seine Stelle und Verhältnis zu den übrigen a priori zu bestimmen. Diese Idee postuliert demnach vollständige Einheit der Verstandeserkenntnis, wodurch diese nicht bloß ein zufälliges Aggregat, sondern ein nach notwendigen Gesetzen zusammenhängendes System wird." *KrV*, B673.

and the possibility of understanding. Nevertheless, this unity is provided by reason.

There is no doubt that Kant's transcendental philosophy was the philosophical basis for post-Kantian idealism. That being said, there was also a deep admiration for the great rationalists, Leibniz and Spinoza, with whom the idealists shared the ambition that philosophical knowledge could be presented in its systematic form as a coherent system. Kant had already provided the tools and Spinoza had showed how it could be done.

The examination of reason was understood as the highest philosophical method for achieving knowledge. Due to the unity of reason, no knowledge stands apart from or without the coherence of its constitutive relations. Knowledge is coherent by nature and implicitly forms a coherent system. Philosophy can therefore take up the task of exploring the systematics of knowledge, that is, of exploring the system of knowledge. The philosophical system – in Fichte's version a so-called 'Science of Knowledge' (*Wissenschaftslehre*) – was understood as the scientific form of philosophy that could bring together all of the knowledge of the different sciences. The philosophical system is a structured coherence that deduces its content from one single principle, a self-evident and self-grounding principle, a *principle of the absolute*.

In pursuing this line of enquiry, Fichte followed Kant closely, beginning with the notion of the self-consciousness of the subject. For Kant, self-consciousness consists in the subject's enterprise of combining or synthesizing representations with each other. This synthesizing is independent of the content. The unity and structure of experience constitute the continuity of the conscious self. In Kant's own thinking, this structure is not a property of reality in itself but a property of the thinking cognitive faculty. The principle of this unity, Kant's *principle of apperception*, ties the self to any cognitive activity, to thinking as such.

If, as proposed by Dieter Henrich, the Kantian subject can be outlined with the three characteristics of *unity*, *activity*, and *emptiness*, then we find that each characteristic inseparably ties the subject to a world in a relation that is constitutive for both.¹⁵⁰ The subject is defined by its way of having thoughts about something. The subject is only a subject because something is given (to it), hence, there is no subject unless something (anything at all) is given.¹⁵¹ The subject is characterized by the unity of thoughts and the active incorporation of thoughts into that unity. The subject is therefore not an entity independent from the world. This is why the subject is

¹⁵⁰ Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 38–41. See Henrich's exposition of the central transformation of Kant's thinking into the idealist project of the philosophical system. Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, esp. 15–61.

¹⁵¹ Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 41.

characterized as empty. The content of the subject is always something that is not itself. Henrich calls this the 'internal accusative' in the 'I think.'¹⁵² The emptiness of the subject states the necessary relation of the subject to its content, that is, the thoughts about the world.

In this notion of the thinking subject, Fichte identified the principle of the unconditioned, the absolute, from which to point out the coherence of knowledge, that is, to deduce a system.¹⁵³ The self, as the inherent unity in the thinking enterprise, contains a reflective aspect, which is the self-consciousness of the '*Ich*'. While thinking of something, the '*Nicht-Ich*,' the *Ich* is aware of *itself* as the one thinking, which makes the *Ich* comprehensible only through the "indissoluble mutual correlation between the unity of self-consciousness and unity of the world."¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the unity of the world reflects the more fundamental unity of the *Ich* because, as Fichte saw it, objects of thought are produced by the *Ich*.¹⁵⁵ Fichte therefore employed the principle of *Ich* as the principle of the absolute.

Inspired by Fichte's agenda, Schelling, and later Hegel, took up the task of formulating a philosophical system. However, in contrast to Fichte, Schelling and Hegel posed the absolute not as the unity of the *Ich*, but as a unity underlying the thinking subject and its content, that is, a unity prior to their distinction. This move was actually a critique aimed against Kant for having abandoned the identity of the subject and the world and not having united the subject-object dichotomies in a vital connection.¹⁵⁶ Schelling and

¹⁵² Ibid. "There is always an 'internal accusative' in the "I think," but its content is not an analytical implication of the meaning of the "I think." *What* I am thinking is something different from the structure "I think" and is contingent in relation to it."

¹⁵³ Following his short programmatic essay, *Concerning the Concept of the Science of Knowledge*, Fichte's most influential philosophical treatise was his 1794 *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge*. Among many other highly regarded publications, the different versions of his system bear witness to the fact that Fichte was occupied with the project of his *Science of Knowledge* throughout his entire life.

¹⁵⁴ Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 22. See also Henrich, *Between Kant and Hegel*, 15–28.

¹⁵⁵ Kant's own argument for the unity of self-consciousness is that we can represent nothing as combined in the object without having previously combined it ourselves. "[D]aß wir uns nichts, als im Objekt verbunden, vorstellen können, ohne es vorher selbst verbunden zu haben, und unter allen Vorstellungen die Verbindung die einzige ist, die nicht durch Objecte gegeben, sondern nur vom Subjekte selbst verrichtet werden kann, weil sie ein Actus seiner Selbstthätigkeit ist." Kant, *KrV*, B130.

¹⁵⁶ Compare Andrew Bowie, who writes: "The vital factor which has sustained the actuality of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* is its refusal to see the thinking subject as simply opposed to nature as a world of objects, because the subject is itself part of nature" Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, 31. Frederick Beiser offers a similar explanation: "Rather than making nature the product of the transcendental subject, the absolute idealists [Schelling and Hegel] did the very opposite, deriving the transcendental subject from its place within nature. The rationality of the Kantian-

Hegel's idea of the absolute as the unity that underlies all differences has far-reaching ontological consequences. No matter how much the world and the thinking subject could be thought of as separate, they ultimately had to belong to the same deeperlying unity, which was in fact what explained the very possibility of a subject-object encounter.

Schelling, who first exposed this idea in a philosophy of nature, was especially concerned with *the question of origin*: thought and its content (subject and object) are both parts of the world and must therefore derive from the same origin. Schelling's radical inclusion of everything into a monism carries with it the idea of an absolute origin for everything. This is the ontological implication of the claim that the absolute is nature. In Schelling's philosophy of nature, the argumentation follows the idea that being has itself organized the compatibility of thinking with the world in order to gain, through reason, knowledge about itself. Hence, the epistemic features of the subject must have a common origin with (or in) the rest of everything. The subject's access to the world cannot be set aside, ontologically suspended, or excluded as an obscure exception from what exists. Experience manifests a compatibility, or fit, between the world and our access to it: the fact that we are granted *some* sort of access to *something*. Consequently, the thoughts we have about whatever we are granted access to cannot *not* be part of what is. They must derive from a common origin.

The idea of the absolute as the common origin entails the *auto-epistemic feature* of post-Kantian idealism, which, in various expressions, asserts that being has a relation to itself through consciousness as such.¹⁵⁷ The idea is that being reflects itself, that it is conscious of itself (*Bewußt-Sein*): the self-consciousness of being. The possibility of experience and cognition is both an achievement and a feature of being. The possibility of experience therefore documents a form of compatibility and connection between being and thoughts. To speak of the world as something real, separate from thoughts about the world, as objective, as external, inevitably runs into problems. Schelling is occupied with the idea that thoughts about the world also derive from the world. As Wolfram Högbe says, the cosmological implication of this idea is that human cognition echoes the existence of the world, insofar as the existence of the world causes there to be *a world for us*.¹⁵⁸ Schelling is keen on this evolutionary speculation that the world

Fichtean subject now became nothing more than the highest manifestation and realization of the powers of nature" Frederick Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781-1801* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2002), 4.

¹⁵⁷ Högbe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 51–58.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 23–25. Högbe offers an illuminating description of Schelling's formation of this stance in his relation to Fichte: "Schelling erkannte, daß die kognitiven

gives rise to the perspective of the thinking subject on itself, or the fact that the world is conceivable for someone, 'for us'. This influences his entire approach to ontology in which the epistemic and cognitive capacities are thought into the question of being as such.¹⁵⁹

In the early period, circa 1797-1799, Schelling's primary concern with these matters of ultimate immanence was carried out as an attempt to formulate the system of nature.¹⁶⁰ The concept of nature is derived from the possibility and the existence of a *realm of experience*. Schelling did not approach nature directly, as a philosophical exploration of physical-biological nature. His concern was guided by the phenomenon of experience to which such a thing as nature appears. Thus, the central question is how a world 'outside of us', including nature and our experience of it, is possible at all.¹⁶¹ Schelling's aim was to show the coherence between 'the outer world' and the fact that we, as thinking subjects, come to see it *as* outer. The question of origin does not therefore

Leistungen des Ich in ihrem transzendentalen Spielraum insgesamt ein Faktum vom Charakter des Nicht-Ich sind. Anders ausgedrückt: sicher gilt mit Kant und Fichte, daß wir die Welt nur soweit *erkennen* können, als wir sie erkennen *können*, aber *daß* wir dies können, so Schelling, ist nicht wiederum eine Eigenschaft unseres Könnens, sondern der Welt: *Welterkenntnis* ist jedenfalls auch ein *Weltereignis*. Es ist die Natur, die erkennende Entitäten hervortreten läßt, und so greift die Produktivität der Natur durch die epistemische Verfassung und Leistung der Subjekte noch hindurch in dem Sinne, daß wir selbst in unseren Erkenntnissen bloß Dokument einer sich selbst erkennenden Natur sind und mit dem Faktum des Erkennens jedenfalls nicht aus ihr herausspringen. Deshalb impliziert, so Schellings Argument, die Erkenntnistheorie letztlich eine kosmologische Option derart, daß die Weltenstehung ein Echo in unserer Welterkenntnis hat. Daß es überhaupt eine Welt gibt, hat zum Resultat, daß es eine Welt für uns gibt." Högrefe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 23–24.

¹⁵⁹ In his early writings he says: "Die äußere Welt liegt vor uns aufgeschlagen, um in ihr die Geschichte unseres Geistes wieder zu finden" *SW*, I 383.

¹⁶⁰ Schelling's first draft on a philosophy of nature was written in 1797, the *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, followed by *Von der Weltseele* in 1798, on the organizing forces of nature. In 1799 Schelling published *Einleitung zu dem Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie* in which he laid the ground for the relation between transcendental philosophy and philosophy of nature as two corresponding sciences. In *Abhandlung über das Verhältnis des Realen und Idealen in der Natur*, 1806, Schelling's concept of nature in many aspects reached back to elements in his early unpublished studies on Gnostic thinking and Plato's *Timaeus*, thereby giving warning of a greater change. For an introductory overview of the stages of Schelling's philosophy of nature see Wolfgang Wieland, "Die Anfänge der Philosophie Schellings und die Frage nach der Natur," in *Materialien zu Schellings philosophischen Anfängen*, ed. Manfred Frank and Kurz Gerhard (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 406-440; Hans-Jörg Sandkühler, ed., *F.W.J. Schelling* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1998).

¹⁶¹ The guiding question of Schelling's philosophy of nature is: "Wie eine Welt außer uns, wie eine Natur und mit ihr Erfahrung möglich sey" *SW*, II 12.

concern the outer world, but, even more fundamentally, the origin of our conception of it as an outer world, and hence, as an object of thought.¹⁶²

Kant failed by separating nature and reason by means of two different sets of laws. Accordingly, Schelling was therefore dedicated to developing a general theory of nature that could unite an understanding of the mental and the physical under a single idea. The very possibility of experience was, after all, a central expression of a subject-object split that reflects a split within a primordial unity.¹⁶³

Schelling's first complete proposal of a transcendental system, the *System of Transcendental Idealism* (1800), has many architectonic similarities with Fichte's *Science of Knowledge*, and clearly foreshadows the method of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). Schelling's philosophy of nature had countered Fichte's subjectivistic approach to the subject-object identity with an objective approach. However, Schelling's 1800 system develops the subject-object identity from two opposite sides or poles: the realism of his philosophy of nature and the idealism of transcendental consciousness. The identity of the absolute is thereby developed both from the unconscious to the conscious (realism) and from the conscious to the unconscious (idealism).

It is important to underline that for Schelling, knowledge carries with it an ontological feature, which makes consciousness itself an ontological principle understood as *Bewußt-Sein*. In the philosophy of nature, consciousness is articulated as *soul*. However, the conception of the absolute self-consciousness gives rise to individuality in the form of finite

¹⁶² Beiser calls this concern with experience a *naturalistic epistemology*, that is, "one which attempts to explain the origin and possibility of knowledge by placing the subject and object of knowledge within nature as a whole" Beiser, *German Idealism*, 511. Elsewhere Beiser says, "If transcendental philosophy could postulate the absolute reality of the ego, *Naturphilosophie* could do the same for nature itself. The fundamental presupposition of *Naturphilosophie* is therefore the autonomy of nature, which means that the basic forces of nature must be sought within it. True to this new, more naturalistic standpoint, Schelling now called his *Naturphilosophie* 'the Spinozism of physics.'" Beiser, *German Idealism*, 530.

¹⁶³ Early on, Schelling is aware of the gravity of these metaphysical questions and the problem of immanence. In *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1895) he asks "Warum gibt es überhaupt ein Gebiet der Erfahrung? Jede Antwort, die ich darauf gebe, setzt das Daseyn einer Erfahrungswelt selbst schon voraus. Um also diese Frage beantworten zu können, müssten wir vorerst das Gebiet der Erfahrung verlassen haben: hätten wir aber einmal jenes Gebiet verlassen, so würde die Frage selbst wegfallen" *SW*, I 310. The fact of experience is incomprehensible. Schelling calls it a tension or the original conflict in the human spirit. "[D]er *ursprüngliche* Widerstreit im menschlichen Geiste [...] Dieser Punkt aber ist kein anderer als *das Heraustreten aus dem Absoluten*; denn über das Absolute würden wir alle einig seyn, wenn wir seine Sphäre niemals verließen; und träten wir nie aus derselben, so hätten wir kein anderes Gebiet zum Streiten." *SW*, I 294.

consciousness and the dimensions of human action. Schelling's system covers both theoretical and *practical* philosophy, as well as aesthetics, in the form of a history of art. The principles of nature reflect a necessity that Schelling, through the implementation of practical philosophy, expands and combines with second nature in the form of freedom and applies to individual subjects. The absolute is unfolded through its continuous development in the *history of self-consciousness*, which shows the development of second nature in the historical formation of right and the state, that is, in a moral world-order.¹⁶⁴

Schelling's employment of a historical approach to the absolute as a history of self-consciousness, has severe consequences for the understanding of the eternal and unchangeable nature of reason. To derive *the history of being* from the historical development of self-consciousness is to submit reason to a historical process of developmental stages. The implementation of history is decisive for the development of Schelling's later thought in a *historical philosophy*, later identified as *positive philosophy*.¹⁶⁵ In his later work, the history of self-consciousness is explored through the history of mythology (the *Philosophy of Mythology*) and the history of religion (the *Philosophy of Revelation*).

In 1801, Hegel entered the public philosophical scene by publishing a comparative analysis of Fichte's and Schelling's philosophical systems entitled *Difference of the Fichtean and Schellingean Systems of Philosophy* (commonly referred to as the *Differenzschrift*). Hegel appears to sympathize more with Schelling, no doubt reflecting that Hegel was working closely together with him. Hegel's analysis provides an important insight into the ambition of a philosophical system and the issues, components, and methods that surround Fichte's and Schelling's manner of formulating a philosophical system. Hegel's own development towards a system had started by this point, though it would take many years to flourish into the

¹⁶⁴ "[A]lle Theile der Philosophie in Einer Continuität und die gesammte Philosophie als das, was sie ist, nämlich als fortgehende Geschichte des Selbstbewußtseyns." *SW*, III 331.

¹⁶⁵ In the 1821 lecture from Munich entitled *System of Ages of the World*, we find the first expression of discernment in Schelling's philosophy between logical and historical philosophy. *System der Weltalter: Münchener Vorlesung 1827-28 in einer Nachschrift von Ernst von Lasaulx* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1990), 10–14. Positive philosophy avoids reducing the content of mythology to principle or doctrinal form. It is the merit of Axel Hutter to have explored the nature of the historical philosophy in Schelling's later works and its relation to the ideas of the early system. Axel Hutter, *Geschichtliche Vernunft: die Weiterführung der Kantischen Vernunftkritik in der Spätphilosophie Schellings* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996).

all-embracing encyclopaedic work that has often overshadowed discussions of Schelling's later and less public development of the same time period.¹⁶⁶

In a presentation of his system as an absolute system of identity (commonly referred to as the *Identity Philosophy*) in 1801, Schelling presented the unity of the twofold movement of the system as the *point of indifference* by which the philosophy of nature becomes identical with the standpoint of reason, the standpoint of transcendental philosophy.¹⁶⁷

Schelling's idea of an absolute system of identity is conceived as a *rationalistic monism*. The world consists, in its totality, of one single indivisible substance, which is identical with reason and grounded on the principle of identity, $A = A$. This principle contains the complete unity and indifference of the subject and the object, of realism and idealism, and of the physical and the mental. However, the ideas of identity and indifference are obviously tied to the notions of difference and opposition, at least insofar as the latter serve as conditions for identity. Decisively, Schelling does not flatten out his monistic ontology and deny difference, as is often assumed by his critics. Instead, being is formulated in the feature of identity of difference, which is reason. In order to see this, we need to follow the aspect of vitality that characterized Schelling's thinking since his early philosophy of nature, and the development of his philosophy of identity.

5.4 Freedom

Since his early work with the philosophy of nature, Schelling operated with a notion of *vitality* and an idea of *organic* and *dynamic* unity. Schelling describes the development of being towards a higher conception of itself through the emergence of more complex constellations of principles called *potencies*. The metaphor of an organism provides a structural model that characterizes the notion of an all-embracing monism.

¹⁶⁶ For the sake of presenting Schelling's developments more clearly, I leave out further discussions on Fichte's and Hegel's own developments. This is not to say that their dialogue and the later disputes with Hegel do not play a part in Schelling's development, but that these aspects take the focus of this study too far beyond my intentions and into further historical questions that cannot be covered within this presentation.

¹⁶⁷ *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (1801) followed up by *System of the Whole of Philosophy and the Philosophy of Nature in Particular* (1804). Even four years later in the *Philosophical Introduction to Philosophy of Mythology* Schelling still explains the Identity philosophy in terms similar to the original introduction: "Indifferenz des Subjektiven und Objektiven [...], womit sich der Sinn verband, daß in Einem und demselben mit völlig gleicher Möglichkeit das Objekt (die äußere Welt des materiellen Seyns) und das Subjekt als solches (die innere, bis zum bleibenden Subjekt, zu Gott führende Welt) gesetzt und begriffen sey." *SW*, XI 371. See also Beiser, *German Idealism*, 551–595.

Essentially, the organism is a dynamic, living whole that cannot be reduced to its parts; it also offers a basis for understanding an immanent duality and polarity, that is, a difference in unity; it enables a notion of organization within the whole; and, furthermore, the metaphor of organism renders possible that several degrees, or ontological potencies, of nature can be treated separately (from an analytical perspective) without standing outside of the whole (ontologically). Hence, the organism is a metaphor that reflects the organization of the whole. Vitality, polarity, productivity, organization, and potencies are some of the key elements that support Schelling's exploration of the dynamic nature of totality while avoiding dualism and static monism.

In his 1798 text, *Von der Weltseele*, Schelling discusses the difficulties with the dualism implied in a vitalist position, as well as the problems of monism implied in static materialism.¹⁶⁸ While advocating a *dynamic monism*, Schelling's notion of vitality, a principle of life, is best understood as a fragile polarity in being that struggles with disturbances in a constant attempt to restore equilibrium.¹⁶⁹ This early notion of vitality is further developed throughout the era of identity philosophy.

In the 1809 *Freiheitsschrift*, we find a strong emphasis on the vitality of Schelling's notion of system.¹⁷⁰ From 1801, though far better expressed in 1809, Schelling's central ambition was to overcome the "one-sidedly realist system"¹⁷¹ by yoking the realist and the idealist parts of the system for the benefit of a new "higher realism."¹⁷² In the *Freiheitsschrift*, the emphasis on vitality remains in a critique of mechanical materialism aimed particularly against Spinoza. A rather long introductory discussion of common understandings of pantheism serves to make this clear. However, the importance of vitality is construed as the systematic composition that enables the embracement of human freedom as "one of the system's ruling

¹⁶⁸ See especially in the section entitled: *Ueber den Ursprung des allgemeinen Organismus*. *SW*, II 491–507.

¹⁶⁹ On the development of Schelling's concepts of *matter* and *life*, see Beiser, *German Idealism*, 483–564.

¹⁷⁰ The full title is *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom and Matters Connected Therewith* (*Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit und die damit zusammenhängenden Gegenstände*) (1809). In the preface to the *Freiheitsschrift* Schelling explains the recent development of his thoughts on a system. In 1801, he says he had merely combined the real part of his system with the ideal part and goes on by saying that he will now (1809) expose the ideal part more thoroughly: "die gegenwärtige Abhandlung das Erste ist, worin der Verfasser seinen Begriff des ideellen Theils der Philosophie mit völliger Bestimmtheit vorlegt" *SW*, VII 334.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, VII 350.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, VII 351.

centerpoints.”¹⁷³ The question concerning the essence of human freedom is the question of *where and how* human freedom fits into the coherence of the totality of all there is.

The question of freedom depends on how nature is constituted in order to produce free individuals within itself. The reality of freedom depends on the possibility of immanent independence. Central to this claim is Schelling’s increasing critique of Spinoza’s pantheistic monism. In particular, Schelling disapproves of Spinoza’s idea that all things contained in God are *things*; and, furthermore, he disapproves with Spinoza’s idea that God is thought of as a thing.¹⁷⁴ This particular, materialistic variety of monism, Schelling suggests, is incapable of accommodating any notion of human freedom since it lacks the necessary vitality. Despite the great respect Schelling had for Spinoza, the bottom line is that he blamed Spinoza’s thinking for being *lifeless* due to its one-sided materialism.¹⁷⁵

It is in this middle period that Schelling undertook an anthropological turn, which had decisive implications for the systematic ambition of philosophy. The human being, and in particular *human freedom*, opens up new aspects of the conditions of a system and the way it is supposed to reflect an organized world. One of the central concepts that follows from this anthropological concern is the concept of *personhood*. This concept pertains to the human being and its conditions for existence, to the characteristic of a personal human nature with personality, and to a way of being-in-the-world that has its genuine expression in the relation of the human person to a personal God. The history of mythology and religion bares witness to this relation, and becomes an important point of focus in Schelling’s later ontology.

Personhood is different from the notion of self-consciousness that has been defended since Kant. Kant’s notion of self-consciousness was the ground that itself guaranteed the organized world. As Kant had shown, all of the categories of logical thinking lie within subjectivity. For this reason, the *Ich* could function as absolute. However, the concept of personhood follows a radical change: Schelling’s claim of an absolute ground that is outside of or prior to self-consciousness, that is, the insight that ground precedes subjectivity as such.

This influences the role of self-consciousness and ultimately makes it impossible for self-consciousness to be the absolute ground. The absolute withdraws in consciousness and becomes directly unavailable to

¹⁷³ Ibid., VII 336.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., VII 349.

¹⁷⁵ “Daher die Lebloßigkeit seines Systems, die Gemüthlosigkeit der Form, die Dürftigkeit der Begriffe und Ausdrücke, das unerbittlich Herbe der Bestimmungen, das sich mit der abstrakten Betrachtungsweise vortreflich ver trägt; daher auch ganz folgerichtig seine mechanische Naturansicht.” Ibid.

consciousness. Ultimately, reason is left to conditions of contingency as no absolute can be obtained in thought. This is clear in a series of phenomena that Schelling takes up as part of his anthropological approach. For all of these phenomena, it counts that they somehow conflict with the idea of a rationally organized world and a rational absolute. *Madness, chaos, evil, anxiety, and death* are some of the topics taken up in this period of Schelling's thinking, primarily covered by the *Freiheitsschrift* (1809), the *Stuttgart Private Lectures* (1810), and the drafts entitled *Ages of the World* (1811-15). The consequence of reason having its ground outside of itself makes the question of ground the central condition for ontology, beyond which there is nothing but a dark incomprehensible nothing.

[E]verything in the world is, as we see it now, rule, order and form; but anarchy still [*immer*] lies in the ground, as if it could break through once again, and nowhere does it appear as if order and form were what is original but rather as if initial anarchy had been brought to order. This is the incomprehensible base of reality in things, the indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground. The understanding is born in the genuine sense from that which is without understanding. Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance.¹⁷⁶

The central change that underlies these new aspects is the distinction between *existence* and *the ground of existence*. In order to get a hold of the meaning of this distinction, existence can be understood from the etymological meaning of '*ek-stare*', as a standing-out or a stepping-out of the ground.¹⁷⁷ It is the fate of reason to stand out from the ground. Schelling reflects on this ontic situation by asking how it can be *that* we stand out, and yet despite this situation an ordered and meaningful world lies before us: *why is there sense at all and not rather non-sense?*

Fundamentally, the change marked by the ground of existence shakes the very condition of rational thinking in the sense that reason becomes opaque to itself. Being cannot be resolved in reason. Consequently, self-consciousness can function as the grounding principle of knowledge but not as the absolute, because the self-relation of consciousness always takes off from a ground that is not of itself and that can never be resolved in consciousness. This finitude marks the impossibility of self-mediation in a fundamental heteronomy. Schelling calls it 'the incomprehensible base of reality', 'the preceding darkness', or the "dark remainder."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., VII 360.

¹⁷⁷ This understanding of existence remains in Schelling's later exposition. "[A]lles Seyn ist ein Hinausgesetzt-seyn, ein Exponirt-seyn, ein gleichsam Hinausstehen, wie im lateinischen Exstare." Ibid., XII 56. Gabriel discusses the Platonic allusion on this matter, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 336, n285.

¹⁷⁸ *SW*, VII 433.

The situation shows itself as a problem of *beginning*. Beginning as such becomes a way to approach the problem entailed in this thought of an unavailable and *unprethivable* ground. The beginning is out of the reach of the subject, its own beginning, the beginning of thought.¹⁷⁹ This not only concerns the condition of subjectivity. The subject always finds itself thinking something that is determined; it always finds itself thinking what is already placed in thought, without access to that which precedes and enables thinking. The subject cannot initiate or *start to think*, but is captured in the immanence of thought. Due to this condition, the subject cannot completely know itself. It always finds itself thinking in the midst of thoughts. Thinking always comes too late to grasp its own beginning, its own ground. This is what it means to stand out from the ground and exist. To exist implies this detachment and unavailability of ground.

As mentioned, Schelling reflects on the fact that we are in a state of sense, in a state where we already have meaningful knowledge of phenomena. The fact that the human being lives in an ordered world about which it can think is peculiar. Schelling's thoughts on this clearly foreshadow the idea of thrownness taken up by Heidegger. Gabriel, who elaborates on these connections, puts it this way:

We live *de facto* in an [...] intelligible and through that structured world (essence). At the same time we have to accept its facticity and naked givenness, as we cannot ground the being of the world by preceding its being. The world is always already there regardless whether we want it to be or not. No thought precedes being.¹⁸⁰

The implication of this state of sense means that meaningful thoughts always derive from a context and a world of meaning in which meaning is given. This is also a world that we give meaning to. The point is that *it is there*. The unavailability of the ground shows itself in factic existence, e.g. the existence of an ordered world. The factual existence of the world cannot be explained (grounded) with the world, or as a part of that world. The ground of factual existence has withdrawn and precedes the given world unprethinkably.

5.5 Thinking the World

In his notion of *unprethivable being*, Schelling formulates an ultimate origin, one that is not only construed as prior in time, but is the constant

¹⁷⁹ This is the central topic of Schelling's draft of the *Ages of the World*. It is the merit of Högrefe's work to have shown the transcendental ambition in the question of *beginning* and *origin* to Schelling's thinking. Högrefe shows how Schelling's reflections on finitude in terms of time and *past* reflects the logical-ontological problem of *origin* to thinking. I shall address this in chapter 7.

¹⁸⁰ Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 44.

and necessary origin of intelligibility as such. He later calls this “the absolute prius.”¹⁸¹

In Schelling’s lectures in Erlangen in 1821, *On the Nature of Philosophy as Science*, we find an exposition that shows what the changes of this middle period meant for his understandings of system and of knowledge as such. We see in what sense the human being, as a rational being, is understood through the conditions of existence. For an understanding of the rational human being, Schelling’s reading of Kant’s ideal of pure reason becomes essential. Kant’s ideal of pure reason describes the conditions of determination in regard to an unlimited totality that forms the background against which everything else becomes determinate. Only against the background of the unlimited, the horizon of the absolute, can finite things be determined. In agreement with Kant, Schelling insists that the absolute is not only the horizon of determinate things. The absolute is only comprehensible through the rational being in which this idea is grounded, the rational human being. As Kant had argued, reason holds a natural disposition to reify its own conditions of knowledge in a notion of the world. Kant goes further into the specifics of this tendency in the antinomies chapter of his first critique. Schelling’s ontology of freedom develops through an interpretation of this illusion of the reification of the idea of the world.

In his lectures from 1821, Schelling departs from the claim that the possibility of systematic knowledge requires a preceding condition of incoherence, “*asystasia*.”¹⁸² He points to the fact that the Greeks proposed several principles for the coherence of nature, all of which enabled Plato to arrive at the *idea of system*.¹⁸³ Hence, there is a preceding knowledge of the plurality of systems and their disharmonic incompatibility that provides the basis of an understanding of system as such: “the *systems* precede the system. The need for harmony derives from disharmony.”¹⁸⁴ Schelling claims that systematic knowledge presupposes a preceding state of ignorance and incoherence, a state relative to that of the system. Consequently, the idea of metaphysics, as a *true system of totality*, inherently depends upon the plurality of metaphysical systems.

Schelling’s idea is to include this insight into metaphysical thinking itself. The understanding of the necessity of the plurality of systems becomes an insight through which metaphysical thinking avoids simply

¹⁸¹ *SW*, X 286; XIII 67, 127, 164, 248.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, IX 209.

¹⁸³ Schelling mentions the laws of nature proposed by the pre-Socratic philosophers of nature, the spirit-nature dualism, which he assigns to Anaxagoras, and the monistic unity, which he assigns to the Eleatics. *Ibid.*, IX 209.

¹⁸⁴ “Also der Zeit nach sind die *Systeme* vor dem System. Bedürfnis der Harmonie kommt erst aus Disharmonie.” *Ibid.*

adding to the plurality of metaphysical systems, assuming instead the form of a meta-theory. The contents of this higher-level metaphysics are the conditions of possibility for metaphysical systems. What metaphysics, as meta-theory, can do (and what, according to this view, traditional metaphysics have failed to do), is incorporate its own conditions, and thereunder its negation, into its own construction.

Schelling refers to this as the inner conflict of system.¹⁸⁵ This inner conflict is located within human knowledge as the state of ignorance or *non-knowledge*.¹⁸⁶ Moreover, no system should believe itself to be able to dissolve this conflict. The only radical consequence to draw from this inherent characteristic of knowledge is the integration. Metaphysics that aspire to be a meta-theory concerning metaphysics must therefore, in a radical sense, take the form of a “unity of unity and opposition,” as Schelling has characterized the absolute since his Identity-system.¹⁸⁷

In accordance with Kant’s ideal, the human being establishes knowledge by means of a transcendence through which it is beyond determinate things. Knowledge of determinate things is achieved by undertaking limitations on a horizon of an unlimited absolute. These limitations are carried out by human reason. However, it is impossible to carry out the same limitation (determination) when it comes to ‘the unlimited,’ the absolute, through which limitations become possible. Ultimately, this means that the absolute, as the grounding principle of knowledge, is *unavailable* to knowledge. The absolute escapes its own definition because definition requires limitation (*de-finition*). In constructing a system of the whole by deducing it from an absolute principle, reason has claimed a definition for what is indefinable.¹⁸⁸ In its attempt to define its own grounding principle (self-

¹⁸⁵ “Also die Idee des Systems überhaupt setzt den nothwendigen und unauflöslichen Widerstreit der Systeme voraus: ohne diesen würde sie gar nicht entstehen.” Ibid., IX 211. My italics.

¹⁸⁶ “[D]er innere uauflösliche Widerstreit im menschlichen Wissen.” Ibid., IX 213. In Kant’s chapter on the ideal of pure reason we also find a note concerning reasons awareness or ‘knowledge of ignorance’. Kant’s example is the calculations of the astronomers who have “exposed for us the abyss of our *ignorance*, which without this knowledge [*Kenntnisse*], human reason could not have imagined [*vorstellen*] to be so great; reflection on this ignorance has to produce a great alteration in the determination of the final aims [*Endabsichten*] of the use of reason.” Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 603. Translation slightly modified.

¹⁸⁷ “Einheit der Einheit und des Gegensatzes.” *SW*, IV 235f; IX 209. Decisively, this is a standpoint above the oppositions of individual systems, a standpoint that copes with the conflict of systems: “die Idee jenes höheren Ganzen zu fassen, in welchem die widerstreitenden Systeme durch ihr Zusammenbestehen jenes höhere Bewußtseyn erzeugen, in dem er wieder frei ist von allem System, über allem System.” *SW*, IX 214.

¹⁸⁸ *SW*, IX 216.

grounding absolute) and make the unavailable available, the infinite finite, the unlimited limited, the system has already failed.

Nevertheless, it is natural for the rational human being to attempt to determine the absolute. The entire history of metaphysics shows how different conceptions of the absolute have been employed in order to ground the certainty of knowledge. Schelling's Kantian point is that the condition that enables determination and definition as such (the ability to define) remains fundamentally indefinable.¹⁸⁹ Schelling's employment of Kant becomes an argument that all systems (or theories) that make universal claims generate an opaque structure that makes them 'blind' to their own constitutive ground.

According to Schelling, the question concerning totality, or 'all there is', is not primarily a question of knowledge, that is, as something that can be solved or answered with the right knowledge. The *idea of totality* remains the condition of knowledge and can never become the object of knowledge. Knowledge has no access to any reality of totality aside from forms of constructed or illusory attempts, because the ground of knowledge is unavailable and therefore without any ultimate guarantee of knowledge.¹⁹⁰ This suggests that knowledge is exactly what will fail in its attempt to set us right in the world, insofar as knowledge will always ground itself on an illusion. The human aspiration to relate properly to the world through knowledge has its own impossibility built into it.¹⁹¹

For Schelling, the conditions of knowledge mean that no epistemic security can be granted regarding the absolute, regarding that which, in any system, is supposed to secure its unity and coherence. Any systematic attempt to determine the absolute has already failed in its very ambition. Schelling, however, does not leave the question concerning the nature of being aside.

If the initial ambition of ontology could be said to be *to determine the nature of totality*, then Schelling can be understood as having moved on to a new ontology, one which in Gabriel's words could be called an *ontology of incompleteness*.¹⁹² This ontology is at ease with the brute fact of the unavailability of ultimate answers, that the absolute is fundamentally unavailable to reason.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ "Hier also der Widerspruch, daß der Mensch das, was er will, *durch* sein Wollen zunichtemacht. Aus diesem Widerspruch entsteht jene innere umtreibende Bewegung, indem das Suchende das, was es sucht, gleichsam in einer beständigen Flucht vor sich her treibt." Ibid., IX 235.

¹⁹⁰ Kant calls this idea a '*focus imaginarius*.' *KrV*, B 672.

¹⁹¹ See Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 15.

¹⁹² Ibid., 17.

¹⁹³ We can say that this ontology accepts the condition that no ultimate perspective or 'ultimate domain' is available. This acceptance rests on the insight that the withdrawal

Schelling removes the very feature of a determinate absolute and establishes his ontology on a constitutive ground that, in principle, cannot be a part of knowledge, namely, *non-knowledge*. In this “duplicity of being and non-being,”¹⁹⁴ Schelling sees the focal point of the relation of the infinite to the finite. The *undefinable* becomes the only possible definition of the absolute.¹⁹⁵ Schelling thereby establishes an ontology on the constitutive relation between knowledge and non-knowledge. Hence, there is no claim that we cannot know anything, only that we cannot know the ground of knowledge, which is the being of the world.¹⁹⁶

Having established that knowledge depends on an absolute, which is unavailable, Schelling sees a danger. It is possible that the indeterminacy and indefinability of the absolute is merely negatively established *from the side of knowledge* and already determined, negatively.¹⁹⁷ This would imply the existence of an opposition apart from the absolute. It would thereby compromise the unity of unity and opposition. Schelling’s solution is to grasp the absolute as *a movement out of indeterminacy*, that is, as the very process through which the indeterminate becomes determinate, as *becoming*. Indeterminate, the absolute holds the capacity *to become determinate*, to take a form, as well as to give up any determinate form. In this sense, the absolute is above all that is given.¹⁹⁸

From the idea that the indefinable absolute cannot be negated against an opposite (which would place an opposition outside the absolute), Schelling argues that the indefinability of the absolute consists in a capacity to become definite. It is this capacity, this *freedom* to take on a determinate form that positively describes the absolute. The absolute is not the form but the capacity (*das Können*) to take on a determinate form. Freedom is its

of the absolute is that which enables whatever knowledge we have. As Gabriel puts it, “the domain of all domains is not a thing, but a withdrawal constitutive of the possibility of something being given to knowledge.” Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ “Duplicität des Seyns und nicht-Seyns,” *SW*, IX 220.

¹⁹⁵ “Ich muß eben das Indefinible, das nicht zu Definirende des Subjekts selbst zur Definition machen.” Ibid., IX 216.

¹⁹⁶ Schelling calls it *the absolute subject* and further illuminates it with the designation ‘*Urstand*’: “Sie ist absolutes Subjekt = Urstand; wie kann sie denn Gegenstand werden? Unmöglich kann sie es werden *als* absolutes Subjekt, denn als solches steht sie zu nichts in gegenständlichem Verhältniß; es ist das absolute Urständliche, dem nichts etwas anhaben kann, insofern das eigentlich Transcendente.” Ibid., IX 225.

¹⁹⁷ “Denn selbst das Wort *unendlich* drückt ja doch eigentlich nur die Negation der Endlichkeit aus... Also wissen wir doch eigentlich nur, was jenes Subject nicht ist, nicht aber, was es ist.” Ibid., IX 218f.

¹⁹⁸ The arguments presented by Schelling involve an ability to be different, or *to not being forced to be indeterminate*, but being absolute in the sense that every option is available: not to have a form as well as to have form. Ibid., IX 219.

essence. The absolute is “nothing but the eternal freedom.”¹⁹⁹ In the *Freiheitsschrift* this is already formulated in the statement that ‘will is primal Being.’

In the final and highest judgment, there is no other Being than will. Will is primal Being [*Ursein*] to which alone all predicates of Being apply: groundlessness, eternality, independence from time, self-affirmation. All of philosophy strives only to find this highest expression.²⁰⁰

From this it follows that the absolute stands in a dependent and constitutive relation to a determination *through* which (and through nothing else) it can demonstrate its indeterminability. Another characterization of the primal being is *yearning*. The absolute, however, can only strive for what is ultimately itself. Schelling sees yearning as a movement towards self-actualization, a stepping into being (existence). Already in the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling makes use of a notion of *revelation* to characterize the yearning nature of the absolute.

The process through which the absolute takes on determinate form lies in finite consciousness, in the various attempts to formulate metaphysical theories and to determine the absolute subject. Throughout the history of philosophy, the absolute has demonstrated its indeterminacy in the *plurality* of determinate forms. The infinite is therefore likewise infinite capacity, and it is so in two ways: On the one hand, it is infinite capacity to take a form; on the other hand, it is infinite capacity to withdraw from that form. Schelling calls this withdrawal the “self-destruction” of the absolute.²⁰¹ While there is no final or proper determination of the absolute, improper determinations provide proper insight into its indeterminability. The meta-theoretical level of this ontology lies in the insight into the non-objectification of the absolute. This insight is drawn from the plurality of determinate forms (in various metaphysical systems), an insight achieved by finite consciousness. As pointed out by Gabriel, insight into the antinomy of human knowledge, achieved without objectifying the infinite, *is itself the infinite*.²⁰² This insight (derived from the improper forms of the absolute), which reflects the constitutive relation of knowledge to non-

¹⁹⁹ “Ich möchte es aber nicht so ausdrücken: es ist das, was frei ist, Gestalt anzunehmen. Denn so würde diese Freiheit als *Eigenschaft* erscheinen, die ein von ihr noch verschiedenes und unabhängiges Subjekt voraussetzt - sondern die Freiheit ist das *Wesen* des Subjekts, oder es ist selbst *nichts anderes als die ewige Freiheit*.” Ibid., IX 220.

²⁰⁰ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 21; *SW*, VII 350.

²⁰¹ “Selbstzerstörung” *SW*, IX 225. “[...] denn nur indem es Gestalt annimmt, aber aus jeder wieder siegreich heraustritt, zeigt es sich als das an sich Unfaßliche, Unendliche.” *SW*, IX 219. Gabriel further adds a note regarding ‘*heraustritten*’ (to step out) that alludes to the Latin term ‘*existere*.’

²⁰² Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 18.

knowledge, is the infinite in its non-objective form. Hence, in its attempt to determine the absolute in a determinate form, and in its capacity of being beyond determinate form, human knowledge *is* infinite. That human knowledge is the infinite, means that it is that in which the self-destruction of the absolute is achieved. This is Schelling's reason for taking up the history of human consciousness in the history of mythology and religion in his later works.

The central point is that the infinite is not simply determined negatively against the finite, but *through* it, placing human knowledge within the absolute and its self-conscious relation to itself (God). This self-relation is important in order to understand how human knowledge is to be understood within the infinite. Schelling refers to this relation as a co-science, a "Mitwissenschaft, *conscientia*",²⁰³ and he determines the tie of the finite to the infinite, which underlies human knowledge, as *freedom*. In the idea of the capacity of the absolute to become determined we see a central part of Schelling's ontology of freedom as it pertains to the question of determination. *As free*, the human being is beyond determination. Freedom is that which drives knowledge to seek out its absolute ground, the infinite. Freedom is, in human knowledge, the transition of the infinite into finitude, of the unlimited into the limited, of the indeterminate into the determinate.

Within the development of Schelling's ontology of freedom, he confronts the problem of the concept of *being as determinate being* in the way it is employed within the tradition of rational metaphysics. In order to break out of this concept of being as determinate being, Schelling develops an alternative concept of being that is established within a separate, new philosophy – a philosophy concerned with the history of determinate being and hence with a historical concept of being. For these two concepts of being, Schelling formulates two separate but complementary philosophies, one negative and one positive.

²⁰³ *SW*, IX 221. We find the same designation at the beginning of the *Ages of the World* in which Schelling makes an exposition on consciousness as science, or science as functioning through the act of recalling to consciousness. This idea covers a central anthropological point about the role of the human being. "Aus der Quelle der Dinge geschöpft und ihr gleich, hat die menschliche Seele eine Mitwissenschaft der Schöpfung. In ihr liegt die höchste Klarheit aller Dinge, und nicht so wohl wissend ist sie als selber die Wissenschaft." *SW*, VIII 200.

6 Determination and Contingency

6.1 Towards a Positive Philosophy

Schelling's ontology of freedom is based on a critique of rational metaphysics and its attempt to complete its self-constitution in thinking alone.²⁰⁴ The rational closure of totality became a problem for Schelling for various reasons. Centrally, the post-Kantian ambition to systematize forms of reason, knowledge, by means of *a priori* principles, carried with it the ideal of a complete science of reason that could incorporate all parts of reality into a coherent system of concepts and principles. Like Hegel and Fichte, Schelling had provided several attempts to carry out this vision of (Kantian) transcendental philosophy in the form of a (Spinozian) rational system. The system was conceived as the ideal rational form of the unity of being and thought. Kant's notion of self-consciousness, as the capacity of combining representations, entailed the implication that philosophy can grasp reality because reality is (already) intelligible by the forms of reason. The idea of the systematic form of reason amounts to a complete immanence of rational thinking, a logical immanence. Directly aimed against this immanence, Schelling's critique served to renounce the sufficiency and self-mediation of *a priori* thinking with regard to actual existence. Schelling's central claim was that *the unity of being and thought cannot be grounded in thinking* because it is conditioned beyond the boundaries of thinking, by the fact of existence that precedes thinking.

One of the driving forces behind Schelling's later ontology is the notion of facticity, as it is expressed in the question: *why is there something rather*

²⁰⁴ My reading of Schelling's later thought follows many paths provided by the works of Schultz and Högrefe: Walter Schultz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*.; Högrefe, *Prädikation und Genesis*. Finally, the recent demonstration of the actuality of Schelling's late ontology offered by Markus Gabriel has played an important role for this study. Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*; Markus Gabriel, *Mythology, Madness, and Laughter: Subjectivity in German Idealism* (London; New York: Continuum, 2009), 1–95; Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*. In their approach to Schelling, Högrefe and Gabriel fundamentally agree in many regards. Nevertheless, Högrefe is more directly concerned with Schelling's logical argumentation and only occasionally unfolds the related anthropological aspects. In that regard, Gabriel has improved upon the basic components of Högrefe's reading by approaching the broader context of the positive philosophy. That being said, the agenda of *transcendental ontology* proposed by Gabriel also has its limits. In many regards, Gabriel seems to tie personhood too radically to the question of truth-apt thinking and an understanding of the human being as concerned with truth. In my view, this derives from his emphasis on skeptical arguments and from the fact that he hesitates to engage with many of the aspects of personhood from the *Freiheitsschrift*. My reading of personhood, as presented in chapter 7, seeks to include more of these aspects in a reading that follows many of his paths.

than nothing, why is there anything at all? The question hinges on the role of experience, as does the entire endeavor of Schelling's mature thinking. Schelling wants to liberate experience from the grip of thought, from 'the web of reason'. Reason cannot call anything into existence, it can only respond to the fact of their actual existence. In this sense, the fact of actual existence is a facticity prior to the experiencing subject.

The question of facticity is conceived within the scope of human life. In other words, the fact of existence is a fact to the human being. Schelling's concern with human life-phenomena is not secondary or marginal in his ontology of freedom:

Thus far from man and his endeavors making the world comprehensible, it is man himself that is the most incomprehensible and who inexorably drives me to the belief in the wretchedness of all being, a belief that makes itself known in so many bitter pronouncements from both ancient and recent times. It is precisely Him, the human, who drives me to the final desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?²⁰⁵

In another lecture Schelling poses the question in a different and rather illuminating way: "Why is sense at all, why is there not non-sense [*Unsinn*] rather than sense..."²⁰⁶ The questions addressed in many of Schelling's texts reflect the tie of the question of being to the question of sense. The condition of the intelligible form of being is the central question of Schelling's later ontology. The idea is that sense is taken for granted without providing the necessity of its own existence. The question is therefore why we take sense to be original, which we should not. Schelling says: "the entire world is trapped in the web of reason, but the question is: how is it fallen into this web."²⁰⁷ This way of posing the question of existence as the question of sense ties ontology to the conditions of semantics.

²⁰⁵ F.W.J. Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy: The Berlin Lectures* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 94. "Weit entfernt also, daß der Mensch und sein Thun die Welt begreiflich mache, ist er selbst das Unbegreiflichste, und treibt mich unausbleiblich zu der Meinung von der Unseligkeit alles Seyns, einer Meinung, die in so vielen schmerzlichen Lauten aus alter und neuer Zeit sich kundgegeben. Gerade Er, der Mensch, treibt mich zur letzten verzweiflungsvollen Frage: warum ist überhaupt etwas? warum ist nicht nichts?" *SW*, XIII 7.

²⁰⁶ "Warum ist Sinn überhaupt, warum is nicht Unsinn statt Sinn?", F.W.J. Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie. Münchner Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833*, ed. Horst Fuhrmans (Torino: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1972), 222. See also Michelle Kosch, *Freedom and Reason in Kant, Schelling, and Kierkegaard* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 2006), 105–112.

²⁰⁷ Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie. Münchner Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833*, 222; *SW*, X 143f.

6.2 Actual Existence

At this point, we are trying to get a hold of Schelling's critique of rational philosophy as a critique aimed at the conditions of logical immanence. Schelling's motivation for supporting this critique with a new philosophy, *positive philosophy*, lies in the notion of actual existence. This notion derives from a distinction between two aspects of knowledge, which Schelling develops from a discussion on Kant's critical philosophy.

Schelling asserts a fundamental distinction between two things, a distinction that is present in all knowledge of something existing: the first is the essence (*Wesen*) of a thing as a matter of what a thing is, *quid sit*, and the second concerns the fact *that* (*Daß*) a thing really exists, *quod sit*.

The former – the answer to the question *what* it is – accords me insight into the *essence* of the thing, or it provides that I understand the thing, that I have an understanding or a concept of it, or have it itself within the concept. The other insight however, *that* it is, does not accord me just the concept, but rather something that goes beyond just the concept, which is existence [*Existenz*].²⁰⁸

This distinction leads to the central claim concerning the limits of reason and the essential function of experience. Schelling claims that reason alone cannot provide the proof for existence, that only experience can do that. Reason, rather than excluding experience, depends on it.²⁰⁹ With this claim, Schelling turns against central principles of the rationalistic tradition. The deeply rooted trust in the capacities of reason to discover itself from within itself shatters. Schelling's critique points out that the 'science of reason' is ignorant about the decisive role of experience and to the fact that reason, regarding the question of *actual existence*, is insufficient and depends on experience.

²⁰⁸ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 129. "Jenes – die Antwort auf die Frage: *was* es ist – gewährt mir Einsicht in das *Wesen* des Dings, oder es macht, daß ich das Ding verstehe, daß ich einen Verstand oder einen Begriff von ihm, oder *es selbst* im Begriffe habe. Das andere aber, die Einsicht, *daß* es ist, gewährt mir nicht den bloßen Begriff, sondern etwas über den bloßen Begriff Hinausgehendes, welches die Existenz ist." *SW*, VIII 58.

²⁰⁹ "Reason provides the content for everything that occurs in experience; it comprehends what is real [*Wirkliche*], but not, therefore, reality [*Wirklichkeit*]. This is an important difference. The science of reason does not provide what really exists in nature and its particular forms. To this extent, experience, through which we know what really exists, is a source of knowing independent of reason and, thus, travels right alongside it." Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 131. "Die Vernunft gibt dem Inhalt nach alles, was in der Erfahrung vorkommt, sie begreift *das Wirkliche*, aber darum nicht *die Wirklichkeit*. Denn dieß ist ein großer Unterschied. Das wirkliche Existiren der Natur und ihrer *einzelnen* Formen gewährt die Vernunftwissenschaft nicht; insofern ist die Erfahrung, durch die wir eben das wirkliche Existiren wissen, eine von der Vernunft unabhängige Quelle, und geht also neben ihr her." *SW*, XIII 61.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant said that knowledge has two sources: sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) and understanding (*Verstand*). These two sources are distinguished in the way the object, through our reception, is *given*, and, through our understanding, is *thought*. Schelling struggles with the question as to how an object comes to appear as an *existing* object: is it to sensibility or to the understanding? For something to be recognized as an existing object, it needs to be *determined as existing*. According to Kant, this determination can only be provided by the understanding, which holds the capacity to apply categories. This means that an object exists due to the possibility of the understanding to apply the proper categories and concepts necessary for the determination of existence. Schelling says:

The object *as such* [...] presupposes that the categories have already been applied, at least that of the most general, namely, that of being. What is provided through sensibility can therefore not yet be the object, but can only be just the *sensible impression*.²¹⁰

What Schelling points out is that the object is an object only to thought (understanding), and not sensibility. All determination and conceptuality, including that of existence, lies in the understanding and not in sensibility. Sensible intuitions apply the (a priori) principles of sensation, the aesthetic forms of space and time, which are the conditional forms of all sensible intuition. However, they do not apply to concepts. Existence, the fundamental state *that* something exists and thereby can be said to be an *existing* object (as opposed to merely being thought and imagined), requires the application of the categories of understanding.²¹¹

For Schelling, this is a tension that resides in Kant's distinction of sensation and cognition. Schelling sees that for Kant, whatever precedes the categories is beyond determination and completely outside of concepts. The so-called *thing in itself* becomes 'a thing' only to the understanding, which holds the conceptual capacities to determine its existence and status as an object etc. Schelling objects to the sufficiency of this explanation: To place the fundamental determination of existence within the understanding alone creates a contradiction regarding whether we speak of an existing object or a mere thought object, it makes *existence a complete matter of thought*. Schelling's notion of existence precludes the isolation of reality in thought.

As little as can be said about what precedes the grasp of an object by the understanding, Schelling does require that it be uniquely present in sensible

²¹⁰ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 122. *SW*, XIII 47.

²¹¹ Schelling says "[...] daß uns durch die bloße Receptivität unmöglich schon der Gegenstand gegeben seyn kann. Denn so allgemein und unbestimmt wir auch den Begriff Gegenstand denken mögen, so sind in diesem bereits Verstandesbestimmungen anzutreffen, doch wenigstens *die*, daß er ein Seyendes, ein Wirkliches ist." *SW*, XIII 47.

experience, and therefore outside of the parameters of reason. Schelling speaks of this as the origin of the object. The object has its origin in what is indeterminable. This origin causes the possibility of the cognition of an object and is ‘the unprethinkable’ ground of being. However, the point of the problem that Schelling sees in Kant’s setting is that “we *must* apply the categories of being, of causality, and so on to that which according to the presupposition is external to all categories.”²¹² There must be something that precedes the categories, albeit completely unavailable to thought.

This incomprehensible moment of existence prior to conceptual determination is best described as *the fact of existence*. Schelling derives this idea from a Kantian dilemma, or from the discovery of a dilemma in Kant: reason by itself cannot provide the proof that something exists. The distinction between *what-ness* and *that-ness* is central. Schelling accepts the condition that it is possible to have a concept without a real cognition while also accepting that it is impossible to have a cognition without a concept.²¹³ However, the fact of existence – the mere positivity, the fact *that* something exists – cannot be granted by reason. It can only be taught by experience.²¹⁴ Even though experience can say nothing about what it is that exists, the mere state *that* something appears to experience asserts this basic fact of existence. The condition that the existence granted by experience derives from a pre-determinable, pre-conceptual *prius* makes it pure *that-ness* without any *what-ness*; it achieves no further determination than mere existence. Schelling underlines that at this moment of mere existence the object is still not *what it will be* through the determination of reason. Hence, it is still reason that determines *what* it is, or, in Schelling’s temporal figure of speech: *what will exist*.

The upshot of this argument, for Schelling, is a mark of the parameters of reason (and the science of reason). We cannot say much about these limits aside from asserting that they are there, precisely because they regard an existence that gives itself to reason from beyond reason, that is, from

²¹² Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 123. *SW*, XIII 49.

²¹³ The close tie between sensation and cognition that Schelling objects to is reflected in Kant’s famous quote: “Without sensibility no object would be given to us, and without understanding none would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind.” Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A51/B75.

²¹⁴ “To prove that something exists cannot be an issue for reason, due to the simple fact that, by far, the most of what reason takes cognizance of from itself [*von sich aus*] occurs in experience and what is a matter of experience requires no proof that it exists precisely because it is already determined as something that actually exists.” Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 129. “Zu beweisen, daß es existirt, kann schon darum nicht Sache der Vernunft seyn, weil bei weitem das Meiste, was sie von sich aus erkennt, in der Erfahrung *vorkommt*: für das aber, was Sache der Erfahrung, bedarf es keines Beweises, daß es existire, es ist eben darin schon als ein wirklich Existirendes bestimmt.” *SW*, XIII 58.

beyond rational discourse. Unprethinkable being is fundamental because reason is concerned with general aspects of existing things, but, as Schelling says, things do not exist *in general* but as particular things, here and now. This ties experience so close to reason that reason directly depends on experience. Without turning his thinking into a direct empiricism, Schelling has incorporated an empirical feature. He believes himself to have elevated experience from being a mere source of knowledge to being the *escort of reason* (*Begleiterin*).²¹⁵

6.3 Two Philosophies

Any attempt to grasp totality in a conceptual logic, a logical immanence, will fall short in the question concerning the fact of existence. It is the fact of existence that Schelling frames in the question of why is there something rather than nothing – a question out of reach of any rational explanation and a fact upon which all rational discourse rests. Making his point, Schelling framed the purely rational philosophy as *negative philosophy* and the philosophy deriving from the insight into the limits of the purely rational philosophy as *positive philosophy*.

In the attempt to grasp reality through eternal and conceptual essences, rational philosophy rejects and denies the particular and positive.²¹⁶ It does this by *negating* it as unreal, or by sublating it into a concept. This negation of the positive is always present in rational philosophy, which only looks to the eternal and unchangeable essence of things, never to their particular, actual existence. The central move of Schelling's later thinking is therefore to complement negative philosophy with a *positive philosophy*. The difference between negative and positive philosophy is that between "a science that grasps the essence of things and the content of all being and a science that explains the actual existence of things."²¹⁷

Schelling's critique of negative philosophy does not intend to abolish negative philosophy or what is achieved through it. The critique is aimed at

²¹⁵ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 131; *SW*, XIII 62. At a later point Schelling explicates this as follows: "If among the categories that stand at our behest for the designation of philosophical doctrines, empiricism can be opposed to nothing other than rationalism, then positive philosophy, as the antithesis of rationalism, will nevertheless be incapable of denying that it is also in some way and in some sense empiricism as well" Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 178; *SW*, XIII 126.

²¹⁶ "[...] it has regarded everything that preceded it as nothing, as not being." Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 195; *SW*, XIII 150. Already in the *Freiheitsschrift* Schelling considers what it would have meant to Kant's thinking if this insight of existence would have been implemented into his thinking. *SW*, VII 352.

²¹⁷ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 155; *SW*, XIII 95.

“its fundamental error... that it wants to be positive.”²¹⁸ Schelling does not even want to alter negative philosophy. His critique serves to point out that negative philosophy can only complete itself through a positive philosophy. The primary task is therefore to illuminate the parameters of negative philosophy and, through that, its dependency on a philosophy that deals with the positive. Ultimately, these two are not only meant to supplement each other, but can only be defined and discerned properly through each other.²¹⁹ Through positive philosophy, negative philosophy is supposed to gain the necessary confidence concerning its limits. It is Schelling’s point to let negative philosophy play out and hit its limits in the encounter with the question of existence. Negative philosophy can work regardless of the fact that positive philosophy turns to that which is prior, because the transition to positive philosophy lies in the limit (itself) of negative philosophy; thinking does not begin with what is first or what is most fundamental. Even though both philosophies are required, Schelling ultimately concludes that positive philosophy is more fundamental because it does not depend on negative philosophy for its own grounding, because an act of *willing* suffices. The primal *will* to actualization, the freedom of the absolute, is the ground of positive philosophy.²²⁰

²¹⁸ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 145; *SW*, XIII 80. This is also a central point in the way Schelling turns his critique of negative philosophy against Hegel, “The philosophy that Hegel presented is the negative driven beyond its limits: it does not exclude the positive, but thinks it has subdued it within itself.” Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 145; *SW*, XIII 80.

²¹⁹ “Only the correctly understood negative philosophy leads to the positive philosophy; conversely, the positive philosophy is first possible only in contrast to the correctly understood negative. Only the latter’s withdrawal back into its limits makes the former discernable and then, not only possible, but also necessary.” Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 145; *SW*, XIII 80.

²²⁰ *SW*, XI 564; XIII 93, 153. The relation of negative and positive philosophy has been a primary field of interest to scholars the last fifty years and a question of much debate. As there is no direct gain for this study, I refrain from going deeper into these disputes. The readings of Horst Fuhrmans and Walter Schultz represent the two central positions. On Fuhrmans reading, Schelling carries out an onto-theological project that is centered in a theory of the absolute and a theory of creation. This project is formulated by means of a personal divinity through which Fuhrmans gives clear priority to positive philosophy (cf. Horst Fuhrmans, *Schellings letzte philosophie. Die negative und positive philosophie im einsatz des spätidealismus*. (Berlin: Junker und Dünhaupt, 1940); Horst Fuhrmans, “Der Ausgangspunkt der Schellingschen Spätphilosophie,” *Kant-Studien* 48, no. 1–4 (57 1956): 302–323.). On the reading of Schulz, Schelling attempts a completion of idealism through an incorporation of reason’s own other through the model of ‘mediated self-mediation’. Reason thereby becomes the absolute over against its other as its own transcendent being, which is the integration of its own history. Schulz does not read the late Schelling as a failed speculative philosophy, but rather as the most radical formulation of the nature of thinking (Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*). For a thoroughly exposition

6.4 The Logical Concept of Being

The difference between negative and positive philosophy can be depicted using two different concepts of being: the one, a logical concept of being, and the other, a historical concept of being.

The central characteristic of the logical concept of being is *determinacy*. Schelling refers to this as the “idea of being”, the “figure of being” or the “blueprint of being”²²¹ The identification of a purely rational philosophy with a logical concept of being can retrieve this concept from Hegel. The same concept could, as suggested by Gabriel, also be explained with Plato’s model of determinacy in which it can be seen how determinacy further provides a linkage between *being*, *determinacy*, and *totality*. In Schelling’s later thought, the ‘idea’ designates the totality of meaning as the background that renders any determination possible and meaningful.²²²

According to a common understanding, determinacy is the conceptual fixation of something as opposed to something else. If we follow Gabriel, this also amounts to Plato’s definition, where determinacy takes place within an understanding of the whole of being.²²³ On the platonic model, determinacy is what makes something distinguishable from *everything else*, and what defines things by virtue of their place in the whole. With this we find the representation of totality within determination, that is, in every determinate being qua its determinacy.

of the positions see Hutter, *Geschichtliche Vernunft*, 14–40. Furthermore, the assessment of the role of Schelling’s later thinking within the tradition of post-Kantian idealism has been varyingly interpreted, both as the *completion* of idealism (cf. Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings.*), and as the *resignation* of idealism (cf. Thomas Buchheim, *Eins von Allem: die Selbstbescheidung des Idealismus in Schellings Spätphilosophie* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1992).), and even as the self-dissolving of idealism (cf. Michael Theunissen, “Die Aufhebung des Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings,” *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, no. 83 (1976): 1–29.).

²²¹ *SW*, XI 291, 313. As will be further clarified, Schelling identifies the idea of being with Kant’s “ideal of pure reason”. As Gabriel captures it, idea here means “the totality of determinations from which all knowledge results, that relative to which the endeavour of capturing determinate beings and completely distinguishing them from one another takes place...” *Transcendental Ontology*, 63–64. See also Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 104–115.

²²² Gabriel makes several illuminating interpretations of Schelling’s late thought against the background of antique idealism. See Markus Gabriel, “Unvordenkliches Sein und Ereignis: Der Seinsbegriff beim späten Schelling und beim späten Heidegger,” in *Heideggers Schelling-Seminar (1927–28): die Protokolle von Martin Heideggers Seminar zu Schellings “Freiheitsschrift” (1927–28)*, ed. Lore Hühn (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2010), 83.

²²³ Plato against Parmenides’ ontological monism. Plato, *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper and D. S. Hutchinson (Hackett Publishing Co., 1997), 148a5f.

The understanding of totality as something present in the determination of particular beings is negative in the sense that it concerns absent beings – what a thing is not. Regarding a particular determinate being, the totality implied is negative, and therefore a sort of *nothing*. In Hegel's logic, the understanding of being as determinacy, the idea that something is understood against its negation – nothing, requires for nothing to be a something (not something determinate, but not simply nothing), namely, that against which being is determined as something: a constitutive nothing.²²⁴

The logical concept of being illuminates the unity of being and thought. We could emphasize what was already a central point in Plato: that being, understood as determinate being, is a matter of thought: being as being is recognized only *in* thinking. Furthermore, this logical concept of being requires a certain understanding of the *judgment* in which determinacy is acquired through the application of proper predicates. For the same reason, we find a theory of predication central to Schelling's thinking. It is the merit of Hogebe to show how Schelling's mature metaphysics can be understood on the basis of this central theory of predication, which Schelling defends as a theory of judgment.²²⁵ This theory of predication is built into Schelling's reading of Kant's ideal of pure reason as the key to understanding Schelling's new notion of judgment.

6.5 From Ideal to 'Urwesen'

Before we go deeper into Schelling's reading of Kant's ideal of pure reason, we should consult Kant directly. Kant argues in his first *Critique* that reason not only has the ability to go beyond its own boundaries, but that it does this according to its own nature. This excess lies in a production of ideas that regulate and provide the unity of thinking. Kant thoroughly analyses reason's production of transcendental ideas and the assumption that they form a highest being, an ideal being – what Kant called the *Ideal of Pure Reason*. This ideal forms a philosophical basis that is very important to Schelling's later development.²²⁶

²²⁴ In the section just before commenting on Parmenides, Hegel writes: "Nichts pflegt dem *Etwas* entgegengesetzt zu werden; Etwas aber ist schon ein bestimmtes Seiendes, das sich von anderem Etwas unterscheidet; so ist also auch das dem Etwas entgegengesetzte Nichts, das Nichts von irgend Etwas, ein bestimmtes Nichts. Hier aber ist das Nichts in seiner unbestimmten Einfachheit zu nehmen." *a. Einheit des Seins und Nichts*, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik I. Erster Teil. Die objektive Logik*. Bd. 5, 8th ed. (Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), 84.

²²⁵ Hogebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 37. In *Ages of the World* Schelling asserts that "die Kenntniß der allgemeinen Gesetze des Urtheils muß die höchste Wissenschaft immer begleiten." *SW*, XIII 214.

²²⁶ *SW*, XI 282.

According to Kant, the pursuit of knowledge rests upon an anticipation of the world as the “idea of absolute totality.”²²⁷ This inherent notion of the world ensures the systematic unity of understanding, that is, of determination, by virtue of which everything that exists can be differentiated in its relations to each other.²²⁸ Hence, the notion of the totality of ‘all there is’ is a feature and a condition of knowledge that enables predication and determination. In this sense, the notion of ‘the world’ as a regulative idea is a condition of the appearance of objects as such. Kant’s ideal of pure reason is developed from the idea of a transcendental totality that forms a theory of the conditions of determination. Conceptual determination presupposes a totality from which all determining predicates used in a judgment stand in relations of either inclusion or exclusion. Whatever is made determinate is rendered through the totality of possible predicates. There is a comparison of predicates at work in all predicates employed for determination.

From the principle of contradiction it follows that only one of two contradictory predicates applies in the determination of a thing.²²⁹ To put it differently, in the register of possible predicates some predicates are excluded due to contradiction. This is a logical principle, and it counts independent of experience. Through another principle, the principle of thoroughgoing determination, it counts that the determination of a thing is made possible only by means of the register of all possible predicates.²³⁰ Kant calls this “the whole of possibility, as the sum total of all predicates of things in general.”²³¹ In this register of all possible predicates a thing derives its own possibility “from the share it has in that whole of possibility.”²³²

While the principle of contradiction, which regards predicates alone, determines which of two contradictorily conflicting predicates apply, the principle of thoroughgoing determination, which regards the object of predication, determines a thing in its relation to all other possible predicates. All things have *characteristics* that stand in inferential relations to each other. Additionally, as things that have characteristics, all *things* likewise

²²⁷ *KrV*, B534.

²²⁸ Kant’s treatment of the transcendental ideal *Ibid.*, B595–B670. See also Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 59–66.

²²⁹ Kant also calls it the ‘principle of determinability’ (*Grundsatz der Bestimmbarkeit*), *KrV*, B599.

²³⁰ The ‘principle of thoroughgoing determination’ *Grundsatz der durchgängigen Bestimmung*, *Ibid.*, B599f. Hogrebe uses the formulation “das *Universalregister der Prädikate*”, while Paul Guyer suggest the fomulation “pool of possible predicates.” Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 60; Paul Guyer, *Kant* (London: Routledge, 2006), 146.

²³¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B600.

²³² *Ibid.*

stand in inferential relations to all other things. For example, when determining a dog, we not only relate it to all dogs, we also relate it to all species within which something can be specified as a dog. Even before that, we relate it to all instances within which something can be determined as being of a certain species, and so on. As the material – Kant even says ‘matter’ (*Materie*) and ‘stuff’ (*Stoff*) – of every determinate thing, the register of all possible predicates defines the possibilities of the objects of predication. The comparison of predicates can never be completed because the amount of predicates itself is infinite. The totality is itself therefore inexhaustible, functioning only as a regulative principle for the epistemic orientation in the world. The complete determination of a thing, however, can never be presented *in concreto* in its totality. Furthermore, the register, as a condition of determination, is acknowledged and presupposed in every determinate thing. The idea of the sum total of all possible predicates (*Inbegriff aller möglichen Prädikate überhaupt*) is a prescription to reason for the employment of understanding:

The proposition *everything existing is thoroughly determined* signifies not only that of every *given* pair of opposed predicates, but also of every pair of *possible* predicates, one of them must always apply to it; through this proposition predicates are not merely compared logically with one another, but the thing itself is compared transcendently with the sum total of all possible predicates. What it means is that in order to cognize a thing completely one has to cognize everything possible and determine the thing through it, whether affirmatively or negatively. Thoroughgoing determination is consequently a concept that we can never exhibit *in concreto* in its totality, and thus it is grounded on an idea which has its seat solely in reason, which prescribes to the understanding the rule of its complete use.²³³

The idea of the sum total of all possible predicates against which the determination of concrete things is made possible is itself indeterminate. It is the logical condition of determination. Every determination is a limitation of possibilities. Hence, the idea of the ‘All of reality’ (*omnitude realitatis*) is the idea of the *unlimited*.²³⁴ We can say that the world, as this notion of totality, is understood as the condition of possibility for the content of the world, the things in (or of) the world, and ultimately of

²³³ “Der Satz: *alles Existierende ist durchgängig bestimmt*, bedeutet nicht allein, daß von jedem Paare einander entgegengesetzter *gegebenen*, sondern auch von allen *möglichen* Prädikaten ihm immer eines zukomme; es werden durch diesen Satz nicht bloß Prädikate unter einander logisch, sondern das Ding selbst, mit dem Inbegriffe aller möglichen Prädikate, transzendental verglichen. Er will so viel sagen, als: um ein Ding vollständig zu erkennen, muß man alles Mögliche erkennen, und es dadurch, es sei bejahend oder verneinend, bestimmen. Die durchgängige Bestimmung ist folglich ein Begriff, den wir niemals in *concreto* seiner Totalität nach darstellen können, und gründet sich also auf einer Idee, welche lediglich in der Vernunft ihren Sitz hat, die dem Verstande die Regel seines vollständigen Gebrauchs vorschreibt.” *Ibid.*, B601.

²³⁴ *KrV*, B604. The discussion in section 5.5 foreshadowed the point here.

determination as such. Consequently, the idea of totality, the unlimited, cannot itself be an object of determination (limitation), save reification. As an idea that enables the pursuit of knowledge, and thereby belonging to knowledge, this concept of the world has no independent objective reality in itself. The totality of the whole is neither an object in itself, nor is it a possible object of knowledge. In sum, the world in which things are things is not an object because objects are determined, finite and limited.²³⁵ From this it is derived that the world, in its feature of totality, must be conceived as the unlimited (*das Unbeschränkte*).

Reason comes, on natural grounds, to a conception of the idea of totality as an ideal being.²³⁶ Kant describes a natural, yet unnecessary, move from a conception of the a priori idea for the representation of totality to “a concept of an individual object that is thoroughly determined merely through the idea, and then must be called an *ideal* of pure reason.”²³⁷ Reason does not presuppose the existence of a being that conforms to the ideal, but only the idea of such a being as an original image, a *prototypon*, of all things. Compared to this, objects – the defective copies of it – become *ectypa*. The ideal being is the highest reality, and it contains all of reality within itself. Every determinate being is derived from it and “takes from it the matter [*Stoff*] for their possibility.”²³⁸ The ideal being is their common *substratum*.

Hence the object of reason’s ideal, which is to be found only in reason, is also called *original being* [*das Urwesen*] (*ens originarium*); because it has nothing above itself it is called the *highest being* [*das höchste Wesen*] (*ens summum*), and because everything else, as conditioned, stands under it, it is called the *being of all beings* [*das Wesen aller Wesen*] (*ens entium*).²³⁹

Reason comes to an understanding of this *original being* as an *existing* being. Kant calls it a “transcendental affirmation, which is a Something, the concept of which in itself already expresses a being, and hence it is called reality (thinghood) [*Sachheit*], because through it alone, and only so far as it reaches, are objects Something (things).”²⁴⁰ Kant explains how the idea of the sum total is hypostasized, which is the case with the concept of God, in the transcendental sense. However, reason only grounds the thoroughgoing determination of things in general, never demanding that this thing should be given objectively. This is why Kant underlines that the

²³⁵ “Die durchgängige Bestimmung eines jedes Dinges beruht auf der Einschränkung dieses All der Realität” Ibid., B605.

²³⁶ Ibid., B528, B609.

²³⁷ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B602.

²³⁸ Ibid., B606.

²³⁹ Ibid., B607.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., B602.

sum total “does not signify the objective relation of an actual object to other things, but only that of an idea to concepts, and as to the existence of a being of such preeminent excellence it leaves us in complete ignorance.”²⁴¹ The notion of the ideal as a particular being is a fiction and an illusion. However, it is a natural illusion. Kant therefore moves on to his discussion and groundbreaking critique of the classic proofs for God.

Schelling provides a detailed discussion of Kant’s ideal of reason, showing the central moves in Schelling’s ontology.²⁴² For example, Schelling’s reading of the sum total of all possibility (*Inbegriff alles Möglichen*) involves an argument that enables a recasting of Kant’s ideal from its status as a highest being into a primordial *origin* of all possibility. Even though we cannot say this aspect was not present in Kant, it became central for Schelling.

Schelling uses the example of the plurality of actually existing species of natural things to demonstrate the idea of a totality of possibilities.²⁴³ According to Schelling it is a natural impression that these species could not possibly be original, nor could they be accidental. They *must*, therefore, derive from “the differences of the nature of being itself [*Natur des Seyenden selbst*].”²⁴⁴ Kant had already given the designation of an *Urwesen*, but not by means of a like argument to that of Schelling – Hogrebe calls this an *evolutionary* argument.²⁴⁵ Kant had used a geometrical argument concerning the *Urwesen*. However, Schelling’s idea is that all of the conditions of possibility lie inherent in primordial being. This is not a question concerning the origin of the organic world. That would be a matter for an empirical investigation. The question of the ultimate origin precedes the determinations that would be used in any empirical investigation. The question of an ultimate origin is completely independent of empirical interests. Instead, Schelling’s concern with an ultimate origin

²⁴¹ Ibid., B607.

²⁴² The place is found in the philosophical introduction to the *Philosophy of Mythology*, *SW*, XI 277–294. See also Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, §11–12; Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, §5–8.

²⁴³ “Das Nächste wäre: als die Correlate dieser Möglichkeiten die wirklich existierenden Dinge nehmen und als deren Möglichkeit die verschiedenen Arten zu seyn erklären, die sie in sich ausdrücken; denn eine andere Art zu seyn hat das Unorganische, eine andere das Organische, in dessen Umkreis wieder eine andere die Pflanze, eine andere das Thier. Wer fühlt aber nicht, daß diese Arten zu seyn unmöglich ursprüngliche seyn können?” *SW*, XI 287f.

²⁴⁴ “Anzunehmen ist vielmehr, daß diese durch Erfahrung gegebenen Arten, durch welche Mittelglieder immer, aber doch zuletzt sich ableiten von ursprünglichen, nicht mehr zufälligen, sondern zur Natur des *Seyenden selbst* gehörigen Unterschieden desselben.” Ibid., XI 288.

²⁴⁵ Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 67–68.

forms the basis of a “speculative cosmology,”²⁴⁶ and not an empirical cosmology. Hogrebe inserts a decisive question concerning whether there is a method that can secure the independency of a speculative cosmology from an empirical cosmology, and he takes Schelling’s central theory of predication to be such a method.²⁴⁷ It is of central interest to Hogrebe’s readings of Schelling to unearth the grounding of a speculative cosmology (formal cosmology) by means of a theory of predication. This theory, which Hogrebe translates into formal logic, is, in Schelling’s version, articulated through the subject-object structure of judgment. Primordial being, Schelling’s recast of Kant’s ideal, is what enables determinations by means of a semantic dimension of predication.²⁴⁸

The approach to a formal cosmology can therefore be characterized as a logical-ontological ontology in the sense that it pursues the origin of intelligibility. Hogrebe draws the broader picture of Schelling’s primordiality as follows:

The genesis of the universe is *sub specie praedicationis* the process through which structures emerge of the kind that can ‘grasp’ singular terms and predicates, i.e. individual things that have capacities and stand in relations. We have no concepts of these entities besides the rules of employment of our concepts, however, these rules presuppose a compatible universe. But such a universe has not fallen from the sky but is *sub specie existentiae* the realization of a possibility that we can infer along the lines of the formal structure of the incomplete predicate Fx.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 68.

²⁴⁷ “Die Frage is nur: gibt es tatsächlich ein methodisches Verfahren, das die Unabhängigkeit der spekulativen Kosmologie von der empirischen garantiert? Auf diese Frage sind wir inzwischen gut vorbereitet: ja, diese methodische Verfahren gibt es, nämlich als Erweiterung der Theorie der Prädikation ‘nach unten’ als Exhaustion der formalen kosmologischen Option jeder Prädikation.” Ibid., 69.

²⁴⁸ Schelling procedes as follows: “Wer könnte z.B. sagen, daß das bloße reine *Subjekt* des Seyns **nicht** das Seyende sey, und müste nicht vielmehr zugeben, daß eben dieses das erste dem Seyenden Mögliche sey, nämlich Subjekt zu seyn. Denn was immer Objekt, setzt das voraus, dem es Objekt ist. Zwar wenn Subjekt, so kann es nicht in demselben Gedanken, oder, wie man zu sagen pflegt, zugleich, das im aussaglichen Sinne seyende *seyn*, es ist mit einer Beraubung gesetzt, aber nur einer bestimmten *Art* des Seyns, nicht des Seyns überhaupt, denn wie könnte das ganz und gar Nichtseyende auch nur Subjekt seyn?” *SW*, XI 288.

²⁴⁹ “So ist die Prim-Modalität zunächst bloß das, was die Möglichkeit für irgendetwas im Sinne singularer Termini oder Prädikate bereitstellt. Anders gesagt: die Genesis des Universums ist *sub specie praedicationis* der Proceß, durch den Strukturen entstehen derart, daß singuläre Termini und Prädikate ‘greifen’ können; d.h. Individuen, die Eigenschaften haben und in Relationen stehen. Wir haben keinen Begriff dieser Entitäten als über die Verwendungsregeln unserer Termini, aber diese Regeln setzen ein mit ihm verträgliches Universum voraus. Aber ein solches Universum ist nicht von Himmel gefallen, sondern *sub specie existentiae* die Realisierung einer Möglichkeit, die

The point of a formal cosmology is *to expose the fundamental structures of meaning* in the origin and the existence of a semantic dimension, a field within which being is grasped. Schelling takes on a drastic strategy for his approach, depicting the origin of meaning in its transition from ‘whatever’ came before meaning. In the formal cosmology, judgment operates exactly in this transition, the transition from the meaningless to meaning. However, the point is that nothing meaningful can be said about what precedes meaning; no determination can be given regarding that which precedes determination. Schelling’s notion of the unprethinkable being refers to this sub-semantic motif. If the elementary predication establishes the nucleus of our epistemic capacity, a nuclear split or descent to the sub-atomic level implies “an uncontrollable dissipation into non-sense. What we want to understand under x and F, before any Fx-structure is established, is simply incomprehensible.”²⁵⁰

Schelling has, in all of his later writings, expressions that attempt to designate this origin of the logical space of predication. What comes before the proposition is prior to meaning, to difference, to rationality, to sanity, and therefore unavailable to any propositional form. It is decisive to understand that this is the central transcendental ambition in Schelling’s project. Even though Hogebe’s reading of Schelling’s ontology draws primarily from the fragments of *Ages of the World*, the theory of predication as a formal cosmology applies to the more general setting of the distinction between negative and positive philosophy. In the fragments of *Ages of the World*, Schelling investigates the evolution of primordial being and the potencies through which primordial being, as the oldest being, comes to itself. Hogebe applies Schelling’s reading of Kant’s ideal of pure reason and provides a theory of an ultimate presupposition prior to possible determination. Primordial being, as the ultimate presupposition, is *the past of cognition* in the sense that it precedes any possible cognition, and it is as such unprethinkable.

One way to approach Schelling’s notion of the unprethinkable lies in his conception of facticity, the *quod sit* of actual existence. We can imagine that two different propositions determine the same thing. The propositions ‘This is a bike’ and ‘This is a construction of metal pipes’ can both be true,

wir am Leitfaden der formalen Struktur des unfertigen Prädikats Fx erschließen können.” Hogebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 69.

²⁵⁰ “Es kommt zu einer unkontrollierten Dissipation von Unsinn. Denn was wir unter x und F, bevor noch eine Fx-Struktur realisiert ist, verstehen wollen, ist schlechterdings unerfindlich. Den einzigen Anhalt, den wir haben, ist der, daß die subatomaren Elemente des zerstrümmerten prädikativen Kerns so behandelt werden müssen, daß sie die Möglichkeit einer Verschmelzung zur elementaren Sinnstruktur Fx repräsentieren. Und genau im Sinne dieser Strategie verfährt Schelling und genau das ist seine Charakterisierung der Prim-Modalität.” Ibid., 70.

and determine something that can never be exhaustively determined and therefore never completed in any form of determination. Hence, there is an infinite surplus of existence residing in the proto-reference that both determining propositions point to. Whatever goes before any proposition and is marked by predicates in the form of propositions is an existence that escapes but ultimately enables its own determination. It is without meaning in itself, and cannot be in a semantic relation *as* unprethinkable. It precedes the relations of determination with an ordered world. Nevertheless, unprethinkable being, which we cannot not think or grasp as such, is the fundamental presupposition of all determination.

Another characterization of the unprethinkable within Schelling's formal cosmology is the *beginning* that cannot be grasped or understood in any way. The world, as an ordered totality, is a semantic dimension, within which things can only be determined according to its own order. Unprethinkable being therefore implies a beginning that precedes the ordered logical space of a dimension of sense, that is, a beginning in non-sense. Schelling says:

Anything that enters the world and becomes actualized for and in the world needs a presupposition, a beginning, which is not what is true or what ought-to-be. But it is not instantly recognized as such. In order to be firmly rooted, this beginning has to consider itself as being for its own sake. Therefore, a higher potency is needed to liberate the development from its presupposition.²⁵¹

To Schelling, the semantic dimension that consists of an ordered world is this higher potency. Schelling's formal cosmology is motivated by the question why is there sense, why is there not rather non-sense? Schelling sets forth to defend the idea that there is non-sense in the most radical way, namely, prior to any sense-making determination. *Sense is dis-ambiguated non-sense*. That is the meaning of the 'blind beginning'. The conditions of possibility of sense lie beyond sense, which means that every judgment occupies a space that was made available through non-sense. The question concerning the existence of sense is not merely an ontological question, but "the logical-ontological *ur*-question."²⁵²

When Schelling says that the entire world is caught in the web of reason, he is pointing out how constitutive structures of meaning hold the world (together) in the form that makes it available to us, the form without which

²⁵¹ *SW*, XIV 315. As Hogrebe puts it: "Der Anfang ist blind, der Sache nach immer das Erstere, dem Begriff nach immer das Spätere; ist er sehend geworden, ist er vergangen. Auf dieser Vergangenheit ruht alles, alles was Gestalt angenommen hat, alles was existiert, auf einem Anfang, 'der nicht aufhört Anfang zu seyn'." Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 114.

²⁵² Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 68.

we would dissipate in non-sense.²⁵³ What Kant had explicated in the ideal of pure reason forms the singular reality that enables the emergence of the logical space of predication. At least since the *Freiheitsschrift* the sub-semantic, pre-predicative being becomes a central concern for Schelling as a concept of 'ground', which designates the vital matter that resides in the abysmal darkness of indeterminacy.

Aside from this treatment of Kant's ideal, a decisive employment of Aristotle permeates this part of Schelling thinking. From Aristotle's concept of *dynamis*, Schelling reformulates a theory of possibility and realization, a theory of potencies. Central components from Aristotle's substance metaphysics guide Schelling's attempt to treat the pre-predicative reality of the *Urwesen*. The intersection of Kantian and Aristotelian thinking shows two pivotal sources for Schelling's late thought.²⁵⁴

Regarding the claim of a primal being, or a prime-possibility of all existing things, Schelling points out that Kant's use of the principle of contradiction only provides a formal possibility, while the principle of thoroughgoing determination provides a material possibility. The step from a formal to a material possibility is not indifferent to real existence, save experience, and is therefore not simply a logical or conceptual matter, but a matter of the existing thing itself. There is an advancement in actual being taking place that Schelling believes to be overlooked by Kant. In the principle of thoroughgoing determination, the thing is determined within the sum total of possibility *as the thing* it is and *not* merely as a concept; it is determined within its inferential relations to all other things. Schelling remarks critically:

This is the place, where, if Kant was concerned with actual Being [*das wirkliche Seyn*] and not the mere representation, the comment should have been found that such a sum total of all possibility could not be for itself; Kant's own expression of it as mere matter, the mere stuff of all possibility applies to the kind that according to Aristotle can never be said for itself but only by another.²⁵⁵

²⁵³ "Die ganze Welt liegt gleichsam in den Netzen des Verstandes oder der Vernunft, aber die Frage ist eben, *wie* sie in diese Netze gekommen sey, da in der Welt offenbar noch etwas anderes und etwas *mehr* als bloße Vernunft ist, ja sogar etwas über diese Schranken Hinausstrebendes." *SW*, X 143f.

²⁵⁴ See also Alfred Denker, "Schelling und Aristoteles," in *Das antike Denken in der Philosophie Schellings*, ed. Rainer Adolphi and Jörg Jantzen (Frommann Holzboog, 2004), 305-320.

²⁵⁵ "Hier war es nun, wo, wenn es Kant überhaupt um das wirkliche Seyn und nicht die bloße Vorstellung zu thun war, die Bemerkung ihre Stelle finden mußte, daß ein solcher Inbegriff aller Möglichkeit nichts für sich *seyn* Könnendes ist; nach Kants eigenem Ausdruck die bloße Materie, der bloße *Stoff* aller besonderen Möglichkeit, ist er von der Art dessen, was nach Aristoteles nie für sich, sondern nur von einem

This means that the principle of thoroughgoing determination not only provides the determination concerning the logical form of a thing a priori, it also provides determination through a comparison of “the thing itself with all possibility”²⁵⁶ through which the relation of reason to “actual Being [*wirkliche Seyn*]”²⁵⁷ comes about. As Gabriel puts it, “through this reason is lead to accredit its logical representation of an *omnitudo realitas* a being outside of representation.”²⁵⁸ Schelling recognizes Kant’s critique of the reification of the totality. For Schelling, however, the central merit of Kant’s analysis is the assertion that “everything that belongs to being” lies “prior to being.”²⁵⁹ This is why primordial being does not ‘exist’, but exists only potentially, as the potentiality (potency) of being. The condition of possibility of existing things does not itself exist, but it precedes what exists as its potency. As the material possibility (that is, potency), the unlimited cannot be in and of itself because it would then have to be determined. It can only *be* through determinate things, through the determination of another potency.

Schelling’s reference to Aristotelian *dynamis* regards the characteristic of *dynamis* as the ‘material of the general’. Schelling says: “The totality of the possibilities [...] cannot itself be as the mere general, it needs One through which it, as a selfless, has its Self, one that is to him as a self-being cause of being.”²⁶⁰ This relation depicts how primordial being actualizes itself as the indeterminate in determinacy. As the prime-possibility of all predication – Hogrebe makes this emphasis repeatedly²⁶¹ – it is the ontic condition and prerequisite of the emergence of a universe that is compatible with the structures of predicating judgments. This implies that the primordial being, the prime-possibility, is without any predicates or completely predicatively unsaturated: “*Prädikatlosigkeit*.”²⁶²

Anderen zu sagen ist. Sollte er *seyn*, so müsste etwas *seyn*, von dem er gesagt würde, und dieses Etwas könnte nicht wieder bloße Möglichkeit, dieses müsste seiner Natur nach Wirklichkeit, und könnte daher auch nur Einzelwesen *seyn*. Allein Kant macht gar nicht die Voraussetzung, daß der Inbegriff aller Möglichkeiten *sey*.” *SW*, XI 284–285.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., XI 284.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 109f.

²⁵⁹ *SW*, XI 285.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., XI 313.

²⁶¹ See especially §9 and §10 in Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 47–58.

²⁶² In the *Freiheitsschrift*, where Schelling construes this moment of indifferent being as ‘Ungrund’, he stresses the impossibility of predication at the sub-semantic: “Die Indifferenz ist nicht ein Produkt der Gegensätze, noch sind sie implicite in ihr enthalten, sondern sie ist ein eignes von allem Gegensatz geschiedenes Wesen, an dem alle Gegensätze sich brechen, das nichts anderes ist als eben das Nichtseyn derselben, und das darum auch kein Prädicat hat als eben das der Prädikatlosigkeit, ohne daß es deßwegen ein Nichts oder ein Unding wäre.” *SW*, VII 407.

6.6 The Ontology of Predication

Schelling applies a theory of potencies to the form of judgment. In a modified form, he follows the Kantian understanding of thinking as judging and thoughts as judgments. In Schelling's theory of judgment, thinking moves through three fundamental structural moments of subject, predicate (or object in the sense of opposing the subject), and the synthesis of both (subject-object) provided by the copula. By means of this structure, thinking determines everything that can be. Everything that can be thought can be, and everything that can be thought must be presentable in the form of a judgment.

Primordial being is the first position of judgment and hence the first potency.²⁶³ Schelling calls it "the mere pure *subject* of being"²⁶⁴ or the "originary subject."²⁶⁵ However, a determinate thing ("the first possibility of being"²⁶⁶) is determinable through predicates, which *always* presupposes something to which the predicate is applied. This first potency is without predicates. It is a raw and indeterminate element prior to the existence of judgment. Högrefe calls it '*pronominal being*'. It is clear that the idea of potencies is applied to enable an understanding of being on different levels. We cannot say that the being of one potency is more real than another. Being unfolds its possibilities through potencies as its *actualizations*. Pronominal being therefore needs to be distinguished from predicative being in order to separate two completely different levels of the actualization of being.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Schelling's theory of potencies, which draws on many Aristotelian elements, was first formulated in his early philosophy of nature. Later however e.g. in the lectures of *Philosophie der Mythologie*, we find that Schelling employs Aristotle much more directly. We find a good example of Schelling's use of potencies to explicate the structures of judgment in the fifteenth lecture: "denn wo Subjekt und Prädicat [ist], ist auch Potenz und Actus; das Erste verhält sich zu Letzterem als seine Potenz; z.B. der Mensch ist die Potenz des Prädicats gesund" Ibid., XI 352.

²⁶⁴ "das bloße reine *Subjekt* des Seyns" Ibid., XI 288. Again: Schelling speaks of the subject and object as the subject and object of the judgment.

²⁶⁵ "Ursubjekt" Ibid., XI 352 n3.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., XI 288.

²⁶⁷ Schelling elaborates on the different ways to explicate being. "Eine andere Art des Seyns ist die des Subjekts, eine andere die des Objekts; wenn wir nicht gern ungewöhnliche Ausdrücke vermieden, könnten wir jenes *das bloß wesende* nennen; auch das wird manchen ungewohnt scheinen, wenn wir das eine als gegenständliches, das andere als *urständliches Seyn* bezeichnen." SW XI 288 my italics. Schelling also demonstrates the differences with $-A$ and $+A$, where $-A$ stands for beings without or prior to any predication and $+A$ stand for the predicatively articulatable being. "denn $-A$ ist ja reines Subjekt, $+A$ das seyende im rein aussaglichen Sinn, insofern Prädicat [...] 1. das Ursubjekt ($-A$), 2. das Urprädicat ($+A$), 3. die Ursynthesis von Subjekt und Prädicat ($\pm A$), die nichts *anders* zu ihrem Prädicat hat, sondern sich selbst." Ibid., XI 352 n3.

The second potency concerns the predicate, the second position in the judgment. Schelling calls it the “originary predicate.”²⁶⁸ However, the predicate alone does not complete the judgment as a proposition in the sense of an actualization. The predicate alone is still only a possibility, which Hogrebe calls ‘predicative being.’ The predicate, as a component of determination, enables articulation and cognition (*primum cogitabile*), which, in Schelling’s formulation, enables being “in the articulated sense.”²⁶⁹ Hence, a third potency is required, the *copula*, in which the subject and the predicate are bound together. Schelling calls this synthesis *spirit*, or the “originary synthesis of subject and predicate.”²⁷⁰ When the pronominal being and the predicative being are bound together in a unity, the third uniting form emerges, which Hogrebe calls “propositional being.”²⁷¹

The third potency is the key point of the logical space that we can call the fundamental semantic dimension of determination. Regarding the third potency, Hogrebe uses the designation “ontic media, within which a so-and-so *can* be, i.e. as the possibility that something and the predicative determination can be connected.”²⁷² Schelling’s ontotology of predication sets out to explain how, through the structure of judgment, sense is a fact that depends on an unprethinkable ground, which it can neither think nor think without. The structure of judgment, however, shows that sense does not derive from the unprethinkable, but depends on its withdrawal.

From Hogrebe’s designation we are offered a way of following the actualization through the potencies. The relation of the first and the second potency entails a transcendental speculation, which we should not be afraid to admit. Schelling is fully aware that we, in the originary subject, speak of something of which nothing can be said. The first potency cannot even be explored as it is because we cannot approach it in its indeterminability. However, from the position of the complete judgment, we must assert the pronominal being as the origin. We must admit that something precedes the determinacy. In characterizing this state, Schelling speaks of a capacity

²⁶⁸ “Urprädicat” Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., XI 288.

²⁷⁰ “Die Ursynthesis von Subjekt und Prädicat” Ibid., XI 352 n3. “[D]as eine *und* das andere [...] aber jedes in *anderer* Beziehung, und nicht einem Theil nach das eine, einem andern Theil nach das andere, sondern es wird *jedes* unendlicher Weise, also *ganz* das eine und *ganz* das andere seyn, nicht sowohl zugleich als gleicherweise.” *SW*, XI 289–290.

²⁷¹ Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 73. Schelling depicts it as $\pm A$ and says “weil es also was es ist auch nicht für sich, sondern nur in Gemeinschaft mit den andern seyn kann, läßt sich auch von dem Dritten (wir wollen es durch $\pm A$ bezeichnen), es läßt sich auch von diesem nur sagen, daß es ein Moment oder eine Potenz des Seyenden ist.” *SW*, XI 290.

²⁷² Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 73.

(*Können*) of being in the first potency, which manifests itself in judgment. He depicts the pronominal being as “*pure Capacity without any Being*,” and the predicative being as “*pure Being without any Capacity*.”²⁷³

Freedom lies at the bottom of all this, as the nature of primordial being. Schelling holds on to the indeterminability of being by characterizing the nature of being as a *yearning* and *will*, as is the point of his statement from the *Freiheitsschrift* that ‘*will is primordial being*.’²⁷⁴ Therefore, the Kantian assertion that the structure of determinacy is judgmental is combined with Schelling’s fundamental emphasis on freedom. Judgment, as the domain of sense-making, provides the domain of existence, a sense grounded in freedom due to the *act of predication*. This is the core of Schelling’s ontology of freedom, which he explicates and defends with an ontology of predication. The ambition of Schelling’s fundamental concern with freedom in an ontology of this kind is to break out of a logical concept of being as mere determinacy. This strategy leads to a concept of being that is characterized as both historical and contingent. Moreover, the central ramification of this ontology is that the propositional structure of being underlies the structure of the world, a structure that is not original but provided by reason. This is why the question of the system is so difficult, and why it is constantly revised throughout Schelling’s thinking. The consequences of the ontology of freedom for the claims of a system are too radical. The feature that the world is structured by means of the logical space of propositions necessarily puts the thinking subject, and thereby the human being, at the center.

In the larger picture, this development in Schelling implies the replacement of the theoretical subject with the human being. Both a one-sided idealism as well as a one-sided realism run into problems of the subject-world relation (as well as the subject-subject relation). Schelling does not conceive of the human being as mere subjectivity but more radically as freedom to be in the world, that is, to inhabit the world. This is the freedom of the human individual, which Schelling takes to cover *action* and *life* as well (“that everything real (nature, the world of things) has activity, life and freedom as its ground”²⁷⁵). This is what Theunissen calls Schelling’s *anthropological real-idealism*.²⁷⁶ The human being, therefore, cannot be determined outside of its involvement in the world, which is why the world and the human being, through the ontology of predication, stand in a relation of mutual determination. Human freedom is metaphysical in the sense that it is a freedom to inhabit the world (in activity and life) as

²⁷³ *SW*, XI 292.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, VII 350.

²⁷⁵ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 22.

²⁷⁶ Theunissen, “Schellings anthropologischer ansatz,” 178.

“the clarification of the human being about itself and its place in the whole.”²⁷⁷

Schelling's break with a logical concept of being covers a certain conception of judgment. In that particular logical conception of judgments, any determinate, individual thing is recognizable only through its referential relations. However, this would imply that the individual is subordinated to the whole, as a mere moment of the whole. The problem with this idea is that the position of the thinking subject in this totality of differential relations is lost out of sight. Hence, the consequence of a strict concern with essence and universality is fundamentally *apositional thinking* that cannot apply reality to particularity. Schelling's proposal of a new concept of being seeks to ground the idea of *positional thinking*, the sort of thinking that understands itself to be *in being*.

The application of his theory of potencies enables Schelling to deploy another model of judgment. This model provides an understanding of the predicative mediation of reason and thereby provides an insight into the precedence of the ground of reason outside of reason.

6.7 Facticity and Contingency

Schelling's interest in Kant's ideal of pure reason not only concerns the functionality of the transcendental idea and predication, but also concerns the question of the reification of an ideal being. However, as Högrefe makes clear, Schelling turns around the order of the reification.²⁷⁸ What for Kant is a regulative idea that happens to lead to its own reification in the conception of a highest being, is in Schelling's construal reversed. Even before the question as to *how* meaning comes about, Schelling's concern is *why* there is meaning *already*, as a factual situation and circumstance. As it is, things *do* make sense as part of an ordered world. This is the factual situation within which the question of sense is raised. From the factual experience of sense, Schelling infers the real existence of the potentialities that necessarily have preceded, in particular the antecedence of primordial sub-semantic being. Meaning is not primordial being, but a consequence and a possibility (potency) of it. Primordial being is not the intelligible itself, but what has made intelligibility possible.

Thinking is not primary, and it always comes too late. Primordial being always precedes thinking. It is “that which, no matter how early we come on the scene, is already there.”²⁷⁹ Consequently, all thought always already

²⁷⁷ Markus Gabriel, *Das Absolute und die Welt in Schellings Freiheitsschrift* (Bonn: Univ. Press, 2006), 48.

²⁷⁸ Högrefe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 125–126.

²⁷⁹ *SW*, XIV 341. Schelling discusses the relation of unprethinkable being to thinking in *Another Deduction of the Principles of the Positive Philosophy*. However, we find various expressions of this idea in the later writings, for example in his 1850 *Treatise on*

finds itself in being, as Gabriel puts it, “in a situation it has not itself set up in advance.”²⁸⁰

Against this Being which, no matter how early we come on the scene, is already there, I have often heard the following objection: such a reality, which precedes all possibility, is unthinkable. And indeed it is unthinkable for a thinking, which precedes Being and therefore for the kind of thinking to which we are accustomed. Thinking posits this Being as its point of departure in order to attain that which it deems as most worthy to and for knowing and thereby as the most desirable thing in knowledge, in order to attain it as a reality. And actual thinking only comes to pass when departing from this point—but just as the *terminus a quo* of a movement, in which, actually, the movement itself does not already exist, still belongs to the movement, so every Being through its progress, by its setting off from itself, becomes a moment of thinking [sc. namely the first potency!].²⁸¹

What precedes thinking therefore belongs to thinking, even though it is beyond what can be thought. This is the origin or beginning of our thinking that can never be the object of our thinking. It is not even the ground of logical space, only the ‘ground of ground,’ as Heidegger would have put it. It marks the impossibility of accounting for the fact of the existence of logical space, which is the contingency of logical space itself.

The belatedness of thinking is ambiguous insofar as thinking cannot illuminate its own ground, it cannot have its own ground as its object. The predicative mediation of thought, as expressed in the logical concept of being, is incapable of reaching outside logical space, outside of the semantic dimension of judgment. The existence of logical space is not itself explained, nor can it be explained with recourse to judgment.

Unprethinkable being is *not* itself the ground of logical space, but the inevitable point of departure. In the *Freiheitsschrift*, Schelling designates the unavailability of a ground of the semantic dimension as the “*non-ground* [*Ungrund*].”²⁸² There is no solid point, no determination or differentiation within unprethinkable being. There is no reflection. Hence, there is also *no* rational relation of the point of departure, the beginning, to the semantic mediation. Methodologically we can say that Schelling starts out from a pre-semantic basis in order to clarify the origin of logical space, any logical space, in which being is being. The mere *facticity* of sense, a

the *Source of Eternal Truths*: “Being is the first, thinking only the second or what follows.” *SW*, XI 587. In the introduction to the *Philosophy of Mythology* he says, “[A]n actuality that precedes all possibility cannot be *thought*. One can concede this in a certain sense and say that for precisely this reason it is the *beginning* of all real thought – for the *beginning* of thought is not yet itself thought.” Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 203; *SW*, XIII 162.

²⁸⁰ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 65.

²⁸¹ *SW*, XIV 341. Translation from Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 70.

²⁸² Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 70; *SW*, VII 406.

logical space that is disclosed by virtue of the structure of judgment, has no ground available for thinking with recourse to judgment, which means that there is ultimately no *ratio determinans*. The impossibility of accounting for the fact of the existence of logical space marks a contingency of logical space as such.

Judgment provides the domain of existence because everything that exists is something. Judgment determines the domain of possible existence through which the determinability of existing things is made possible. Whatever can be (in this domain), can be *something* and can be asserted *as* a something.²⁸³ Hogrebe makes many interesting observations and considerations about the necessity of stable structures for the functioning of logical space. For example, he points out the necessity of adequateness between *what* we seek and ask for ('What is this?') and the possible answers of what we find ('This is a something?'), which all belong to the conditions of propositional thinking. The question conditions the answer. Metaphysics, as Hogrebe sees it, marks this field of possible existence as a stable semantic field. In "this optic metaphysics analyses the structures of the *universal field of seeking* [*Suchfeld*], which already needs to be stable in order for us to be *assertoric finding* [*fündig*]."²⁸⁴ According to Hogrebe this field of propositional structures consists of the original possibility of a connection between subjects and predicates that establishes the domain of possible meaning. Ontology is therefore always conditioned by a demand of knowledge and a demand of sense-making. Whatever makes sense does so due to its compatibility with propositional structures of a demand, due to its place within a domain of possible meaning, any domain.

The point that Hogrebe draws from Schelling's ontology of predication concerns the *structure* of logical space as the conditions of any space or domain as such. Theoretically, there could be infinite domains or 'fields of sense' that, by means of certain semantic rules, all contribute to some sort of determination. Nevertheless, any complete or ultimate determination of a thing remains impossible. The conditions of determination are constituted in such a way as to not eliminate the possibility of misunderstanding. There can always be something added by the employment of another field or domain. As Gabriel points out, this idea naturally supports Cavell's concept

²⁸³ Schelling elsewhere explains this 'as'-structure of determinacy as "[...] das ewige, reine Seyn des Subjekts. Ewig ist, dem *keine* Potenz vorhergeht; in der Ewigkeit ist kein "als"; als etwas, z.B. als A, kann nichts gesetzt seyn ohne Ausschließung von einem nicht A. Hier aber ist das Subjekt nur noch reines, d.h. irreflektirtes, gradaus gehendes, nicht als solches gesetztes Seyn. Denn jedes *als* solches Gesetzztwerden setzt eine Reflexion – ein Reflektirtwerden –, also schon ein Contrarium voraus." *SW*, XIV 106.

²⁸⁴ "In dieser Optik analysiert die Metaphysik Strukturen des *universellen Suchfeldes*, die schon stabil sein müssen, sofern wir in ihm *assertorisch findig* werden wollen." Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 49. My italics.

of 'fields of sense.'²⁸⁵ Furthermore, the concepts of 'logical spaces', 'semantic domains', 'a predicative ambience', are all used synonymously here for a set of conditions, or rules, that enable a semantic structure. In Schelling, this idea of his ontology of predication serves to expose the incapacities of negative philosophy and judgement as employed with regard to the logical concept of being. Schelling formulates the more complete situation through his theory of predication as a theory of the structural condition of the possibility of determination and the necessity of positive philosophy.

Schelling's theory of potencies serves to show how the form of judgment reflects the unity of being and thought. In Schelling's relation to Kant's thinking, we find further cosmological aspects of these ideas. In Schelling's view, the separation of ontology and transcendental philosophy in Kant is a fundamental problem, one that compromises the unity of being and thought. The skeptical consequence of this separation leaves us completely ignorant as to whether our conditions of meaning (such as propositional structures) really have sufficient compatibility with their content. Schelling's recasting of Kant's ideal therefore seeks to conjoin *determinability* and *determination*. We can conceive of this conjunction as the relation of form and content. In Schelling's view, propositional structures do not cover up an ontological gap but manifest the intertwinement of being and thought. The propositional capacities of thought follow from the propositional structures that the world itself has provided.²⁸⁶ Being takes the form of judgment and judgment always moves in being. This is the facticity of sense. The thinking subject operates in being as a given field of propositional structures (Hogrebe calls this a 'discrete ontology'). Gabriel characterizes the anthropological aspects as a "predicative being-in-the-world."²⁸⁷ This is an anthropological aspect to the extent that judgment is not a free-floating static form; it is a willed achievement of a predicative activity. This predicative activity is the enterprise of thinking because, as the Kantian teaching remains, thinking is propositional activity.²⁸⁸

If we return to the problem of appositional thinking and the individual as subordinated to the whole, then it reflects an anthropological dilemma that Schelling identifies in negative philosophy. Kant asserts in the ideal of pure reason that the totality of possible predicates lies inherently, albeit negatively, present in determinate being. This notion of being *as* determinacy, the logical concept of being, assumes a certain conception of judgments by means of which any determinate, individual thing is recognizable through its referential relations. This conception of being

²⁸⁵ Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, 64.

²⁸⁶ See also Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 18.

²⁸⁷ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 84.

²⁸⁸ See also Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie*, 34–35.

carries with it a fatal consequence for the thinking subject *as an individual*. In the totality of referential relations, the individual is subordinated to the whole, which is a problem for the human being and its attempt to come to terms and relate to its own being.²⁸⁹ The attempt to lead all determinations back to universality, for the sake of determination, reveals a dissonance in the particularity of determinate beings, first and foremost of the thinking individual, the finite being.

The problem with negative philosophy is that *the position* of the thinking subject in being, that is, in this totality of differential relations, is lost out of sight. Against this, Schelling states that any *judgment that gives form to being decisively has its place within being*. The idea of being itself, through judgment, is achieved in a position within the whole. Thought is always already in being. Facticity can never be accessed from a neutral position outside of logical space. Determinacy depends on its position within logical space, which is also why no position can provide complete determinacy. This explains why the predicative act of determination is itself fallible. The consequence of positional conditions is that being cannot be assigned necessity. It is necessarily contingent. Determinacy is as such contingent, which is why being *necessarily* must be *contingent*. This contingency applies to the Aristotelian understanding of contingency as that which 'could have been otherwise'. And, in Schelling's view, determinate things can always be determined differently.

If it is the case that the facticity of actual existence can never be accessed from a neutral position outside of meaning, then it follows that it can only be accessed from within the meaning that being already has. It is the fate of being that determination is always achieved from within a particular logical space that enables determination. There is no place outside from which to access being. Being is. The meaning of the words 'being is' lies in the *brute fact* that precedes any talk about intelligibility: there is already meaning. Thought, therefore, always finds itself in being as a situation it has not itself provided. Being, in a sense, is inescapable, and yet it rests on a predicative enterprise in which the thinking subject moves. Movement, in

²⁸⁹ Schelling unfolds this problem in the *Philosophical Introduction to Philosophy of Mythology*. In lectures twenty-two and twenty-three the particular concern is the state and the social position of the individual. Lecture twenty-four then directly approaches that which lies beyond the state: *the individual* (SW, XI 553.). The moral law, which Schelling discusses in relation to Kant, furthermore requires, in the universal laws, a self-denial of the particular being. The question of personhood comes about as a desire of the individual to have its ground not in abstract generalities, but in something that reflects its personal being. Schelling describes this dilemma of negative philosophy, which calls for a historical concept of being, as a dilemma of '*person seeking person*.' SW, XI 566.

concrete situations, witnesses the pre-existence of meaning to any judgmental activity.

While negative philosophy is only concerned with the logical space in which it assumes the logical concept of being to be absolute, positive philosophy emerges from the insight into the contingency of logical space and the unavailability of the absolute. In the lecture entitled *Another Deduction of the Principles of the Positive Philosophy*, Schelling argues for both the possibility and the necessity of understanding being as contingent.²⁹⁰ Schelling confronts the traditional ways of thinking about the unconditioned as a *necessary existing being*. Against traditional conceptions of necessity, he claims a dependency of necessary being on contingency *in order* to be determined as necessary. Contingency is seen as a condition of necessity. Schelling's point is that the contingency of being is already a necessary part of the unprethinkable being as the necessary "possibility of another being."²⁹¹ The entire argument hinges on the movement into determination that Schelling calls *origination*. As soon as something exists, as soon as something originates, it is positioned in constitutive relations to something else. The determinate being of things reveals, in every moment, 'the possibility of another being.' This means that everything that exists is, *as such*, contingent in its determination. One could always have understood something differently. Whatever the case regarding the determination of something, it could always have been otherwise. The relation of the origin to that which originates is reflected as a mutual determination and, hence, as a necessity of contingency. This means that the relation of thought to objects (the relation of concepts to objects) is constitutively fallible.

Schelling mobilizes his arguments retrospectively from the fact of sense, the fact that sense is available. The methodological importance of facticity becomes clear, insofar as it is only the fact of being that reveals the 'possibility of another being', a point that could not have been established from unprethinkable being. This belatedness is itself what shows the origin and the ground to be unavailable. However, this fact remains a fact in the most radical sense, due to its groundlessness, the non-ground.

In Schelling's thinking on unprethinkable being, we find a reversal of the ontological proof of God. The ontological proof, which begins from the concept and infers to being (from essence to existence), does not prove the existence of God, if we follow Schelling. In the idea of the unprethinkable factic *that*, Schelling sees that the concept is preceded by an actual existence without which the concept would not have been applied to anything (from existence to essence). The ontological proof proves the

²⁹⁰ *SW*, XIV 335–356.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, X 282; XIII 263–78; XIV 342f.

preceding sub-semantic existence (*that*) from which existence is determined.²⁹² Unprethinkable being is not the existence of God, which Schelling (in the Christian sense) understands as *spirit*, that is, as self-relation. Schelling's onto-theological approach begins with unprethinkable being in order to reach its intelligibility. Schelling initiates a *philosophy of the history of religion* that explores the history of the coming-to-itself of consciousness: a history of consciousness. As Gabriel shows in his reading of Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology*, Schelling understands the history of religion as *a transformation from being into selfhood* through the development of the notion of the person of God.²⁹³

In the transition from negative to positive philosophy, this reversal of essence and existence becomes a central point. It is reason that comes to realize its own limits and its inability to complete its own self-mediation. The conditions of mediation are therefore exposed from within logical space.

In this facticity of being (in factual sense), we come to see our actual existence as *situated in being*. As many commentators note, there is no doubt that Schelling articulates what later thinking (esp. Heidegger) came to name *thrownness*.²⁹⁴ In Schelling, situatedness in being marks the conditions of the logical space within which we can move but from which we can never step out. We cannot escape the fact of being. In the question 'why is there sense and not rather non-sense', Schelling reflects on the conditions of judgment and determination. Every determination could always be different, and indeterminacy remains impossible. Movement in the space of predication is movement in the contingency of being.

If we briefly recapitulate the distinction and the transition from negative to positive philosophy, then the situation of the individual becomes clearer. Fundamentally, negative philosophy provides an *a priori* structure of the world without applying any reality to contingency. It is a philosophy that attempts to ground itself in logical concepts. It is the ambition of Schelling's critical analysis to show how it ultimately and necessarily fails this task.

Negative philosophy is concerned with the *essence* of things, without any concern for the actual existence of things, that a thing exists at all. Reason can show *what* a thing is with regard to its concept, but it can never determine *a priori* whether a thing exists or not. Negative philosophy therefore claims an immanent necessity within the logical identity of thinking and being. Negative philosophy has its truth in the immanent

²⁹² Högrefe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 120–126.

²⁹³ Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 197–218.

²⁹⁴ See the contributions to Lore Hühn and Jörg Jantzen, eds., *Heideggers Schelling-Seminar (1927–28): die Protokolle von Martin Heideggers Seminar zu Schellings "Freiheitsschrift" (1927–28)* (Stuttgart-Bad Canstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2010).

necessity of its progression. As Schelling sees it, negative philosophy is insufficient in dealing with the particularity of actual existence. In that, Schelling sees the lack of a foundation for negative philosophy regarding its own existence. Hence, reason cannot ground itself and comes short at a limit in thinking, a limit that calls upon positive philosophy. This transition is not a transition in thinking or a transition between two sorts of thinking. It is practical in the sense that the question that provides the transition is the question of will. Positive philosophy is needed, as a concern with *the will* of being as manifest in the positive, which Schelling approaches in the history of consciousness as the history of mythology and religion.²⁹⁵

Negative philosophy is the attempt to get an overview of totality. The problem with this undertaking is the abstraction from the individual *as something individual* in order to conceive it on the horizon of totality. The human being is such an individual, existing being. The excess of purely rational philosophy therefore marks an anthropological prerogative in Schelling's thinking. The insight into the anthropological dilemma of purely rational philosophy is provided by the distinction of *quid* and *quod*, most directly in the notion of *actual existence*. From this insight, it becomes clear that the dilemma cannot be solved from within purely rational philosophy. The dilemma is that the human being, as an active, living, free human being, is embedded in the question of being so as to be itself out of reach of a predicative mediation, that is, out of reach of reason. The dilemma does not regard the theoretical subject, but the *life* of a human being in the full sense of free individual human being. Schelling employs the designation of *person*. Hence, personhood stands at the end of negative philosophy as a problem of the concept of being and as the motivation for a new philosophy that is concerned with a different concept of being, a historical concept of being.

²⁹⁵ “[M]it dem reinen Daß, dem letzten der rationale Philosophie, ist nichts anzufangen: damit es zur *Wissenschaft* werde, muß das Allgemeine, das Was hinzukommen, das jetzt nur Consequens, nicht mehr Antecedens seyn kann. Die Vernunftwissenschaft führt also wirklich über sich hinaus und treibt zur Umkehr; diese selbst aber kann doch nicht vom Denken ausgehen. Dazu bedarf es vielmehr eines praktischen Antriebs; im Denken aber ist nichts Praktisches, der Begriff ist nur contemplative, und hat es nur mit dem Notwendigen zu thun, während es sich hier um etwas außer der Notwendigkeit Liegendes, um etwas Gewolltes handelt.” *SW*, XI 565.

7 Personhood

7.1 “Person Seeking Person”

Schelling's ontology of freedom develops a historical and contingent concept of being that can be understood through three central characteristics: *proposition*, *position*, and *personhood*, of which the latter is yet to be unfolded. Like the two first characteristics, personhood is a notion that reflects the sense in which the unity of being and thought is a unity of the world and the human being. Freedom is the central phenomenon of this unity, which is why it is an ontology of freedom. The essence of freedom is the contingency of being. However, the essence of freedom decisively finds its essence through being *human* freedom. Freedom, even in this ontological articulation, is therefore already a matter of the essence of the human being, of what a human being is.²⁹⁶

Schelling's notion of personhood embodies the intertwining of being and freedom, and, as a result, he needs to give a voice to an alternative concept of being, a historical concept of being, by grounding a new philosophy. The logical concept of being is a concept in which being is framed by determination in judgments alone. The historical concept of being derives from the notion of unprethinkable being as a process of the transformation of unprethinkable being into selfhood. The point of positive philosophy is to understand being as coming to itself in the history of the understanding of being. An understanding of being, in the sense of an understanding of totality, is itself a part of being and formative of the history of being. Personhood becomes essential as the basis of the transformation within the process of this self-relation of being.

²⁹⁶ In what follows, the interpretation of the notion of personhood takes off from the transition to a historical concept of being (7.1). In this context, the facticity of existence provides that reason becomes aware of its own finitude, in terms of the heteronomy that underlies its autonomy. From this, I turn to Schelling's initial formulation of finite freedom in the *Freiheitsschrift* (7.2). Furthermore, I show how human finitude reflects the fallibility of freedom and the person as a groundless being. In this regard, I approach the aspect of personal character as a way the person engages actively with its own being as an agent (7.3). This reflects the interpersonal basis of personhood, which is further portrayed in the expression of divine personhood. Eventually (7.4), the question of the human world-experience comes in focus. In this regard, the emotional dimension of personhood comes into consideration, as it pertains to the world-relation and the aspect of divine personality, with which Schelling comes to understand the intelligibility of the world. In the final chapter (7.5), I present a summary that draws the main lines in Schelling's ontology of freedom.

Positive philosophy can be characterized as a philosophy of “person seeking person.”²⁹⁷ The fact that being is historical means that it is understood within the process of a self-relation that is historical. Hence, being is understood in its becoming. Through this process, being relates to itself both as being and as the transformation of being into selfhood. Schelling explores this self-relation in the historical notion of God. The *human* reflection of God (and the history of the reflection) reflects the self-relation of being. The historical concept of being, insofar as it gives room for an ontology of personhood, reveals the intertwined conditions of *being* and the *human being*. This implies that all of being, i.e. the world, is the world of the human being insofar as being and the human being set the conditions for one another.

The historical concept of being derives from the dilemma within negative philosophy (discussed in the last chapter). The facticity of actual existence (the factual *that*) lies beyond the limits of thinking in two respects: the fact of a content of reason, that is, a world that lies before us; and the fact of reason itself, that is, the existence of reason. This facticity is reflected in two questions: ‘why is there sense and not rather non-sense?’ and ‘why is there something and not rather nothing?’ The limit of reason shows itself in a *belatedness of thinking*. This is the experience that reason, in attempting to think the world, finds that it is *already* in the world and that it can never reach beneath or before ‘worldliness’ as such. The world is already implied in the possibility of thinking, which reveals to reason that it is preceded by unprethinkable being in every aspect of thought.

The limit lies in the beginning of thinking and the impossibility of reason grasping its own beginning.²⁹⁸ The beginning is beyond what reason can grasp. As Schelling sees it, reason is too late to think its own beginning, which, for reason, is its unprethinkable ground, its origin outside of itself. Reason is thereby denied self-transparency and forced to give up its attempt to constitute itself.²⁹⁹ As the ambition of an absolute self-mediation of reason is given up, reason encounters its own heteronomy. This heteronomy, which precedes and conditions the autonomy of reason, reveals to reason its own *finitude*. In this regard, the transition from negative to positive philosophy is accompanied by an experience of

²⁹⁷ *SW*, XI 565. This dictum is formulated near the end of the *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology*.

²⁹⁸ For instance: “The *beginning* of thought is not yet itself thought.” Ibid., XIV 162.

²⁹⁹ This is the point that Schulz finds underlies Schelling’s actuality in modern philosophy. “Die ihrer selbst gewisse Vernunft, die angesichts ihres undenkbaren Das die Ohnmacht ihres Denkens erfährt, verzichtet darauf, sich selbst denkend zu ihrem Sein ermächtigen zu wollen, und gerade in diesem Verzicht nimmt sie sich als zu ihrem Seinsvollzug schon ermächtigt hin: sie begreift sich als “vermittelte Selbstvermittlung”.” Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings.*, 8.

finitude. More directly, positive philosophy derives from an insight into the limits of reason. This insight provides the self-consciousness of finitude. This consciousness of finitude determines the characteristic of the self-relation of the human being *as an individual being*.

From the perspective of negative philosophy, it becomes clear that the human being seeks to come to terms with its position in being and its dependence on being for a proper self-understanding. This can be seen as an experience of being *decentered*, or a *disoriented* self-experience. The problem, however, arises as a disjunction between the *individual* human being and the logical concept of being. The individual human being cannot appropriate the world on the basis of a logical concept of being that does not allow for the particularity of the human being. This situation, as Schelling describes it in the introduction to *Philosophy of Mythology*, facilitates the transition to positive philosophy.

The line that Schelling draws between essence and existence is the line between the universal and the individual. Existence is not something that can be determined in general concepts, but only in its particularity: *existentia est singulorum*.³⁰⁰ The question is therefore how individuality can be understood *as individuality*? The essence of the individual is part of the totality of predication. However, the actual and factual existence of the individual cannot be determined in its essence.³⁰¹ There is therefore no rational ground available to individuality as such. The human being becomes aware of its own finitude. This is what Dieter Sturma calls *conscious finitude*.³⁰² In this characterization, Sturma takes personhood to designate the consciousness of one's own finitude as an individual being. In the dictum of 'person seeking person', Schelling accounts for the moment in negative philosophy when the person can no longer grasp itself as an individual, that is, on the basis of the logical concept of being. The

³⁰⁰ *SW*, XI 279.

³⁰¹ We can recall Schelling's words: "Jenes - die Antwort auf die Frage: *was es ist* - gewährt mir Einsicht in das *Wesen* des Dings, oder es macht, daß ich das Ding verstehe, daß ich einen Verstand oder einen Begriff von ihm, oder *es selbst* im Begriffe habe. Das andere aber, die Einsicht, *daß es ist*, gewährt mir nicht den bloßen Begriff, sondern etwas über den bloßen Begriff Hinausgehendes, welches die Existenz ist" Ibid., XIII 58.

³⁰² Sturma's reading of Schelling's theory of personhood as '*bewusste Endlichkeit*' emphasizes the anthropological dilemma that shines through in the 'person seeking person' motto, "Das persönliche Ich verlange nach einen Grund, der nicht abstrakte Allgemeinheit, sondern auch Persönlichkeit ist." Dieter Sturma, "Person sucht Person: Schellings personalitätstheoretischer Sonderweg," in "*Alle Persönlichkeit ruht auf einem dunklen Grunde*": *Schellings Philosophie der Personalität* (Akademie-Verlag, 2004), 69. Sturma has provided substantial explorations of the concept of personhood, not only in his writings on Kantian and post-Kantian idealism but in classical and modern philosophy as well. See Dieter Sturma, *Philosophie der Person: die Selbstverhältnisse von Subjektivität und Moralität* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1997).

turn to a historical, and in this aspect personal, concept of being is therefore motivated by the discomfort and dissonance caused by an *impersonal* notion of being.

Fundamentally, the conceptual totality misplaces the individual in a universal context that can never be sufficiently sensitive to the fact of the particularity and situatedness that underlies the experience of finite being. Personhood is therefore not a principle and it cannot be conceptually determined. Personhood is existence as finite and determined by the awareness of one's finitude. Principles are eternal. They have no beginning. Finite being has a beginning – and an end. The mark of the beginning is the condition of existence – a mark of finitude. *Principles are eternal, where as the human person has a beginning.* As a finite being, the person is marked by its beginning as a being that is conditioned and determined by its own limits. However, in as much as the beginning is there as a limit, it is a limit in the radical sense of not being available. Finitude reveals not only belatedness, but also the perpetual blindness of human existence to its own beginning.

In *Ages of the World*, Schelling approaches this aspect of finite being in the form of a continuous blind spot of existence. He calls it the “beginning that never stops to be beginning.”³⁰³ Hogebe explains how this blind spot underlies the historical aspect of the person. The transition in thought constitutes what Schelling refers to as *past*:

The beginning is blind, according to the matter [*die Sache*] always the former, according to the concept always the latter; when it has become seeing, it has become past. On this past everything rests that has taken form, everything that exists rests on a beginning ‘that never stops to be beginning.’³⁰⁴

For something to exist means that it has a beginning and, moreover, that it always and continuously has a beginning so long as it exists. Hogebe explains the notion of beginning through the implication that something else no longer exists, or that it exists *as that* which does not exist any more, namely, as beginning. From this it follows that existence is bound to its time and to timeliness as the condition of having a past, of having a history.

³⁰³ “Nur so ist wahrer Anfang, Anfang, der nicht aufhört Anfang zu seyn.” Schelling goes on “[...] der Anfang darf sich selbst nicht kennen; welches so viel heißt: er darf sich selbst nicht kennen als Anfang. Nichts ist oder erkennt sich gleich anfänglich bloß für Grund oder Anfang. Was Anfang ist, muß sich nicht als Anfang, sondern als Wesen (um seiner selbst willen Seyendes) ansehen, um wahrer Anfang zu seyn.” *SW*, VIII 314. I refer to the draft of *Ages of the World* in *SW*, which is one of the early drafts from around 1814-15.

³⁰⁴ “Der Anfang ist blind, der Sache nach immer das Erstere, dem Begriff nach immer das Spätere; ist er sehend geworden, ist er vergangen. Auf dieser Vergangenheit ruht alles, alles was Gestalt angenommen hat, alles was existiert, auf einem Anfang, ‘der nicht aufhört Anfang zu seyn.’” Hogebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 114.

A central aspect of the consciousness of finitude is the belatedness with which thought relates to its beginning as absent. Consciousness concerning the absence of beginning *is* the constant presence of beginning. Thus, personhood stands out as something conscious yet ambiguous. Conscious finitude is an existence that relates to its own existence retroactively, as the witness of the absence of beginning. This existence can be understood as withdrawn beginning or, as Hoglebe suggests, as a suppression of beginning.³⁰⁵ The characteristic of finitude or of finite being, here described as a rational limit, further pertains to *time* to the extent that personal being is transformed through its continuous consciousness of its own past. The consciousness of finitude is therefore central to the self-relation of the person as a historical self-relation. The self-conscious finite being is *a historical being* because it relates to itself in the history of its being, which is its becoming. Personhood is therefore the composition of the ontological situation that underlies the domain of determinate being. As such, it must be understood as the historical being in which the determination of being takes place. Being can only be determined by a historical personal being.

7.2 Freedom and Eternity

The problem of beginning is manifested in freedom as the lack of a sufficient ground. The presence of the unprethinkable in everything determinate (its withdrawal) leaves freedom its traces as “the indivisible remainder”³⁰⁶ that is the constant possibility of another being, the possibility of difference. As such, freedom is fallible. The historical character of personhood equally reflects the person as a free agent. The history of the person is the history of its freedom. Schelling’s approach to freedom, which initially gives rise to his notion of personhood, is not an ontological problem, independent of its implication of a practical philosophy. The person is a moral human being because it appropriates itself in the world by means of a freedom that is fallible in the sense of being without a sufficient ground. The constant possibility of another being, as well as the constant possibility of evil, provides the agency that is grounding only through itself. Groundlessness is the fate of the free being.

³⁰⁵ Hoglebe’s reading of Schelling’s transcendental-ontological notion of time asserts that “*Die Zeit ist die Art des Gegebenseins des Anfangs als Verdrängtes.*” Ibid., 114f. Another very illuminating discussion of time is taken up by Oliver Florig in relation to personal self-formation as it is understood from Schelling’s notion of past in *Ages of the World*. See Oliver Florig, *Schellings Theorie menschlicher Selbstformierung: personale Entwicklung in Schellings mittlerer Philosophie* (Freiburg; München: Alber, 2010), 178–211.

³⁰⁶ “[D]er nie aufgehende Rest,” *SW*, VII 360.

In *Philosophy and Religion* (1804),³⁰⁷ Schelling explains the individuality of the free human being as “a fall [*Abfall*] from the Absolute.”³⁰⁸ In this context, the alluded ‘fall of man’ provides the idea of the primal *split* (*Ur-teil*) that enables the self-determination of the absolute self as the self-consciousness of the absolute in a meaningful determinate world. The consciousness of the free human being is this primal split. Freedom is therefore (though understood as a fall and as fallible) a necessary feature of the self-determination of the absolute. Schelling elaborates on the idea of fallible freedom in the *Freiheitsschrift*, in which he determines human freedom in terms of a capacity for good and evil: “the real and vital concept of freedom is the capacity for good and evil.”³⁰⁹

[F]ree action follows immediately from the intelligible aspect of man. But it is necessarily a determined action, for example, to take what is nearest at hand, a good or an evil one. There is, however, no transition from the absolutely undetermined to the determined. [...] In order to be able to determine itself, it would already have to be determined in itself, admittedly not from outside, which contradicts its nature, also not from inside through some sort of merely contingent or empirical necessity since all this (the psychological as well as the physical) is subordinate to it; but rather it would have to be its determination itself as its essence, that is, as its own nature.³¹⁰

³⁰⁷ A volume with many insightful interpretations of this text has been edited by Alfred Denker and Holger Zaborowski, eds., *Philosophie und Religion* (Freiburg; München: Alber, 2008). See especially Oliver Florig, “Die ideelle Reihe der Philosophie - Philosophie und Religion als Versuch, menschliche Freiheit im Identitätssystem zu denken,” in *Philosophie und Religion*, ed. Alfred Denker and Holger Zaborowski (Freiburg; München: Alber, 2008).

³⁰⁸ “Mit Einem Wort, vom Absoluten zum Wirklichen gibt es keinen stetigen Uebergang, der Ursprung der Sinnenwelt ist nur als ein vollkommenes Abbrechen von der Absolutheit, durch einen Sprung, denkbar. Sollte Philosophie das Entstehen der wirklichen Dinge auf positive Art aus dem Absoluten herleiten können, so müsste in diesem ihr positiver Grund liegen [...] Philosophie hat zu den erscheinenden Dingen ein bloß negatives Verhältniß, sie beweist nicht sowohl, daß sie sind, als daß sie nicht sind [...] Das Absolute ist das einzige Reale, die endlichen Dinge dagegen sind nicht real; ihr Grund kann daher nicht in einer *Mittheilung* von Realität an sie oder an ihr Substrat, welche Mittheilung vom Absoluten ausgegangen wäre, er kann nur in einer *Entfernung*, in einem *Abfall* von dem Absoluten liegen.” *SW*, VI 38.

³⁰⁹ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 23. “Der reale und lebendige Begriff aber ist, daß sie ein Vermögen des Guten und des Bösen sey.” *SW*, VII 353.

³¹⁰ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 49–50. “Die freie Handlung folgt unmittelbar aus dem Intelligibeln des Menschen. Aber sie ist nothwendig eine bestimmte Handlung, z.B. um das Nächste anzuführen, eine gute oder böse. Vom absolut-Unbestimmten zum Bestimmten gibt es aber keinen Uebergang. Daß etwa das intelligible Wesen aus purer lauterer Unbestimmtheit heraus ohne allen Grund sich selbst bestimmen sollte, führt auf das obige System der Gleichgültigkeit der Willkür zurück. Um sich selbst bestimmen zu können, müsste es in sich schon bestimmt seyn, nicht von außen freilich, welches seiner Natur widerspricht, auch nicht von innen durch irgend eine bloß zufällige oder empirische Nothwendigkeit, indem dieß alles (das Psychologische so gut wie das

The question of good and evil serves to emphasize the nature of action *as always determinate*. In its transcendental aspect, this pertains to an original act of self-determination that enables the possibility of autonomous being. The nature of this act, as it pertains to Kant's and Fichte's notion of an intelligible act (or *That-Handlung*), is not an act in time, but the continuous (not un-timely) and *eternal* act of self-determination that underlies freedom as such:

Man, even if born in time, is indeed created into the beginning of the creation (the *centrum*). The act, whereby his life is determined in time, does not itself belong to time but rather to eternity: it also does not temporally precede life but goes through time (unhampered by it) as an act which is eternal by nature. Through this act the life of man reaches to the beginning of creation; hence, through it man is outside the created, being free and eternal beginning itself.³¹¹

Sturma has framed this idea as 'prereflexive freedom,'³¹² which entails that freedom derives from the underlying self-determination that initially sets the self apart from the absolute: selfhood. Self-determination is an intelligible act, which means that it does not derive from any specific situations of decision-making, but from a transcendental necessity that underlies autonomy as such. For Schelling, this makes freedom an ontological matter first and foremost, prior to any moral matter. As Sturma points out, Schelling is not giving up on questions concerning guilt and responsibility. Rather, the notion of a predisposition, in the form of a self-determination that enables the free acts of the person (as both good and evil), reflects the conscious identification with these acts through which a person feels guilt and responsibility.³¹³

Physische) unter ihm liegt; sondern es selber als sein Wesen, d.h. seine eigne Natur, müsste ihm Bestimmung seyn." *SW*, VII 384.

³¹¹ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 51; *SW*, VII 385f.

³¹² Dieter Sturma, "Präreflexive Freiheit und menschliche Selbstbestimmung," in *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, ed. Otfried Höffe and Annemarie Pieper, 1st ed. (Akademie-Verlag, 1995), 149-172.

³¹³ Sturma presents this as the central merit of Schelling's concept of freedom for contemporary moral philosophy: "Die Herausforderung von Schellings Freiheitslehre für die Moralphilosophie der Gegenwart liegt in der These, daß das Bewußtsein, nicht anders gehandelt haben zu können, Zurechenbarkeit und Verantwortlichkeit nicht außer Kraft setzt. Auch diese These hat erkennbar eine Phänomenbasis: Personen fühlen sich ungeachtet der Zufälligkeiten von Handlungsumständen und ungeachtet der dispositionalen Festlegungen ihrer Handlungstendenzen, die innerhalb von Handlungssituationen durchaus zwanghaft wirken können, für sich *selbst* verantwortlich – auch wenn sie das oftmals sich selbst gegenüber oder in öffentlichen Rechtfertigungssituationen nicht kenntlich werden lassen. [...] [Das Gewissen] kann Schuld empfinden, obwohl es ihm unmöglich gewesen ist, anders zu handeln. In dem merkwürdigen Bewußtseinszustand, sich trotz aller beigebrachten Entlastungen schuldig zu fühlen – etwa im Fall der ungewollten Schädigung anderer Personen –,

The phenomena of guilt and responsibility reflect the tragedy of belatedness in the inclination to identify with one's deeds, good as well as evil. As free, the person is, on the one hand, necessarily bound to the conditions of selfhood as explained in an initial and intelligible act of self-determination that sets it apart from any causal ground prior to itself; and, on the other hand, it is bound to these conditions in the form of a concern and identification with every action as a responsible and guilt-feeling being that seeks to steer its actions with which it understands itself. Sturma writes:

The decision-making situations of a person are always determined by what a person carries from the past into the present for the future. It is these traces of time that weighs most heavily in the decision-making situations. Self-determination does not have the form of arbitrary decisions, but the carrier of tendencies in time and beyond time. And it is this notion of prereflective freedom that is of significance for the current philosophical theory of self-determination.³¹⁴

The personal agent is therefore always lacking a steady ground, always moving in a timely dimension in which the conscious relation to the deeds of the past becomes the motivational ground for future acts.

Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* is a work on fallibility in a more radical sense than just the moral sense. Fallibility becomes essential because being is actualized will, and, as such, the basis for the contingency of being. What Schelling aims for in his ontology of freedom is an account of the common ontological structure that provides the ground for both epistemology and practical philosophy. This becomes clear in Schelling's central move beyond a Kantian notion of autonomy, as a formal concept of freedom,³¹⁵ to an ontological notion of freedom, *human freedom*.

The ontological implication of this is that being finds its determination in accordance with a fallible freedom that provides 'the possibility of another being.' The person is an agent by relating to itself as the point of identification of free acts. Free acts are expressions of a freedom that has no beginning (causation) beyond the agent. Responsibility is the self-identification of a person with its acts. This identification is the basis for personal self-understanding. As freedom is without sufficient ground, acts

erfährt Schellings Theorie präreflexiver Freiheit eine gewichtige empirische Bestätigung." Ibid., 168–169.

³¹⁴ "Die Entscheidungssituationen einer Person werden dagegen von dem bestimmt, was die Person aus der Vergangenheit für die Zukunft in die Gegenwart immer schon mitgenommen hat. Es ist diese Spur der Zeit, die in den Entscheidungssituationen am schwersten wiegt. Selbstbestimmungen hat denn auch nicht die Gestalt willkürlicher Entscheidungen, sondern die träger Tendenzen in der Zeit und über die Zeit hinweg. Und es ist dieser Gedanke der präreflexiven Freiheit, der für die gegenwärtige philosophische Theorie der Selbstbestimmung von Bedeutung ist." Ibid., 170.

³¹⁵ "Begriff der formellen Freiheit" see *SW*, VII 350f.

are grounded only in personhood. Personality is the ground assigned to freedom, as freedom has no ground itself. The understanding of acts as good or evil (or kind, or mean, or hysteric, etc.) pertains to properties of the personality of the agents. These are generally referred to as personal traits, by means of which we understand the actions of an agent. Thus, acts are acts of the person because no ground of freedom beyond the person is available. Character pertains to the person as the active, responsible identification of one's actions with one's personal identity within the process of a self-formation. Character reflects the responsibility for one's actions as the *personal ground* of one's being as a free agent.³¹⁶

Unfortunately, Schelling does not provide a clear-cut theory of personality. Thomas Buchheim, who has attempted an exposition of a (non-ontological) Schellingian theory of personhood, construes the fundamental aspects of personality and character with reference to the *historical identity of a person*. Buchheim refers to the ability of a person to change itself, which Schelling sees as an aspect of personhood in which the person is free (and sets itself free) from the general. "We call a being personal only to the extent that it is free from the general [*Allgemeinen*] and *for itself*, to the extent that he can be according to his own will and outside of reason."³¹⁷

7.3 Personal Ground

The fact that freedom has no ground beyond the person means that lacking a ground – Schelling calls it the 'non-ground' (*Ungrund*) – the character of a person is the product and the ground of, and for, its acts. This is an ontological condition in the sense that judgment and predication (the structures of meaning) are acts of the person in the radical sense: personhood is the unity of the semantic space or, as Gabriel calls it, 'the open region of sense.' The meaningful world is therefore *the world in which the person can operate as a free responsible agent* and in direct

³¹⁶ In the *Freiheitsschrift* and later writings, Schelling often explains how acts can never follow from a rational necessity but have to be carried out by a responsible character. However, character is the bold affirmation of the decision that grounds an act. In *Ages of the World* Schelling says, "Der Entschluß, der in irgend einem Akt einen wahren Anfang machen soll, darf nicht vors Bewußtseyn gebracht, *zurückgerufen* werden, welches mit Recht schon so viel bedeutet als zurückgenommen werden. Wer sich vorbehält, einen Entschluß immer wieder ans Licht zu ziehen, macht nie einen Anfang. Darum ist Charakter Grundbedingung aller Sittlichkeit; Charakterlosigkeit schon an sich Unsittlichkeit." *Ibid.*, VIII 314.

³¹⁷ "Persönlich nennen wir ein Wesen gerade nur, inwiefern es frei vom Allgemeinen und *für sich* ist, inwiefern ihm zusteht, außer der Vernunft nach eigenem Willen zu seyn." *Ibid.*, XI 281. See also Thomas Buchheim, "Grundlinien von Schellings Personbegriff," in "Alle Persönlichkeit ruht auf einem dunklen Grunde": Schellings Philosophie der Personalität (Akademie-Verlag, 2004), 27–34.

relation with the formation of personal character and personality. Gabriel, who repeatedly emphasizes the ontological status of personhood, writes:

Who we ultimately are at any given time depends on our freedom, since we are only what we make of ourselves (which include what others make of us), what we take ourselves to be. We are held accountable for our personality, for the way in which we see the world and our position in it, because *we are the very open region in which fields of sense appear as such*.³¹⁸

The condition of sense (whatever designation we provide for it: logical space, field of sense, or predicative ambience) is not something a person relates to beyond personal being; *personhood is the foundation of meaning*, it is the ground of meaning. It is in this sense that Schelling's notion of personhood embodies the intertwinement of being and freedom. Freedom and being unite in the person. However, while manifesting the finitude of the human being, freedom also discloses a dimension of infinity. In freedom lies the ability to determine (de-fine, make finite), that is, the ability to form or to transform, the indeterminate into determinacy. Hence, freedom is beyond being in the sense that freedom, as an ability (*Können*), as will, is indeterminate. Consequently, freedom (the freedom of the person) is what sets the person out of reach for possible determination: there is no way to present a person in concepts. This further implies that the person has itself as an open horizon that can be formed by its free acts. The human being is "an undecided being [...] only man himself can decide."³¹⁹ The determination of a person is the formation of a personality that a person gives itself, not in concepts, but in its historical self-understanding and in its way of relating to itself through its historical identity. The basis for this conception of self-formation is Schelling's anthropological statement: "the essence of man is fundamentally *his own act*."³²⁰

³¹⁸ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 71. My italics.

³¹⁹ *SW*, VII 386.

³²⁰ *Ibid.* In the Stuttgart Lectures, Schelling speaks of an instrumental relation to one's being as a matter of advancing or developing as a person: "Unser Seyn ist nur Mittel, Werkzeug für uns selbst. Der Mensch, der sich nicht von seinem Seyn scheiden (sich von ihm unabhängig machen, befreien) kann, der ganz verwachsen ist und eins bleibt mit seinem Seyn, ist der Mensch, inwiefern er ganz in seine Selbstheit versunken ist und unfähig sich in sich selbst zu steigern - moralisch und intellektuell. Wer sich von seinem Seyn nicht scheidet, dem ist das *Seyn* das Wesentliche, nicht sein inneres, höheres, wahres Wesen." Schelling, *SW*, VII 436. In the *Ages of the World* the same aspect is presented in a temporal image as a matter of distancing oneself from one's past or 'producing' the present by overcoming one's past: "Der Mensch, der nicht sich selbst überwunden, hat keine Vergangenheit, oder vielmehr kommt nie aus ihr heraus, lebt beständig in ihr. [...] Nur der Mensch, der die Kraft hat sich von sich selbst (dem Untergeordneten seines Wesens) loszureißen, ist fähig sich eine Vergangenheit zu erschaffen; eben dieser genießt auch allein einer wahren Gegenwart, wie er einer eigentlichen Zukunft entgegensieht; und schon aus diesen sittlichen Betrachtungen

Fundamental conditions are given for the human being to *become* what it is. What a human being is, beyond these fundamental conditions, is not decided for it, is not given in advance. Personhood implies that a personal being takes form in a self-conscious relation to its own history. The form of a person, its personality, its identity, and its history are decided as matters of personal self-formation.³²¹

The focus of Oliver Florig's study of self-formation in Schelling is the personal character of the person. "The person is one who has character, that is, one who gives his being and doing a 'character' [*Gepräge*] and is able to form oneself."³²² Florig emphasizes the gradual development of personal character in line with Schelling's theory of potencies, which, according to Florig's reading, becomes a normative feature of the formation of character.³²³ Personal development derives from an assessment of the potential of one's properties for a certain development (to become a certain person) that can be nurtured in specific directions. This becomes an organized character that provides a basis for further organized development. This is a "process through which the human being molds [*bilden*] itself and forms itself to a determinate *personality*. The properties that the human

würde erhellen, daß keine Gegenwart möglich ist, als die auf einer entschiedenen Vergangenheit ruht, und keine Vergangenheit, als die einer Gegenwart als Ueberwundenes zu Grunde liegt." *SW*, VIII 259.

³²¹ Of the publications on the topic of personal self-formation in Schelling, two recent dissertation works ought to be mentioned: Rie Shibuya, *Individualität und Selbstheit: Schellings Weg zur Selbstbildung der Persönlichkeit (1801-1810)* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2005); Florig, *Schellings Theorie menschlicher Selbstformierung*. Shibuya has given a historical account of the development of the notion of individuality and selfhood in Schelling's thought in the period of the *Identity-philosophy* (from 1801-1810, unfortunately not including the fragments of the *Ages of the World* from 1811). The noteworthy merit of Shibuya's work is her discussion of Schelling's relation to Niethammer's ideal of education and Schelling's critical response as reflected in the formulation of his notion of personhood. In the work of Florig, who aims his focus on the writings from 1801-1811 (Florig particularly focus on the fragments of the *Ages of the World*), the account of Schelling's notion of self-formation receives a clearer systematic form that enables him to more securely position Schelling's notion of personhood regarding central questions of practical philosophy. As much as both authors provide insightful expositions of Schelling's development in this middle period, the ontological development of his later writings is completely left out. Even though their works both reflect the positions of their doctoral supervisors (in Shibuya's case Manfred Frank, in Florig's case Thomas Buchheim) this does not overshadow the fact that they both present many original and insightful reflections on Schelling's thinking.

³²² Florig, *Schellings Theorie menschlicher Selbstformierung*, 63.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 134-140.

being gains in this way (in process) are in the narrower sense his *personal* properties.”³²⁴

The point of self-formation is the idea that our actions are determinate actions, that they are always a formative feature of our character. Schelling stresses this in his definition of ‘the real and vital’ notion of freedom as freedom to do ‘good and evil.’ Our actions are so radically *our* actions that we are never without responsibility or the implied formation of character in everything we do. Schelling depicts this by distinguishing between two wills: the particular will (*Partikularwille*), or self-will (*Eigenwille*), and the universal will (*Universalwille*) that are combined in favor of one over the other. Florig interprets this combination as the underlying orientation of our action. The universal will pertains to our fundamental orientation as free agents. Florig calls it ‘*Grundorientierung*’ (Taylor would call it ‘strong evaluation’). The universal will therefore pertains to the aspects of ultimate goods beyond any situational evaluation of our actions. As Florig says, the universal will is good in the sense that it enables our gradual formation of character in a twofold way: first, through the affirmation of our fundamental orientation; and second, as the trans-formation of our inherent drives for the benefit of our character and future decision-making.

What Florig further brings to light is that self-formation entails a self-departure in terms of a ‘Scheidung von uns selbst’ or ‘Selbst-Scheidung,’ in this gradual development. The point is to see that the individual decision, the ‘Ent-scheidung,’ is formative for one’s character. Good and evil reflect the normative ground of the self-formation insofar as our decisions concretise our fundamental orientation as they become norms of our character. Correspondingly, the self-will is the reversal, or the compromise, of our fundamental orientation in the situational evaluation in which our fundamental orientation is not affirmed and fails to develop the basis (our character) for the benefit of future deeds. “A decision can with Schelling only be determined as evil when it derives from a wrong fundamental orientation.”³²⁵ In the decision-making, according to Florig, we mobilize

³²⁴ “[E]ines *Processes*, durch den er sich selbst *bildet*, sich zur bestimmten Persönlichkeit gestaltet. Diejenigen Eigenschaften, die der Mensch auf diese Weise (im Proceß) erlangt, sind im engeren Sinn seine *persönlichen*.” *SW*, X 289.

³²⁵ Florig, *Schellings Theorie menschlicher Selbstformierung*, 139. In accordance with Kant, Schelling does not say that the content of a decision makes it evil. Its form makes it evil. There is, in this regard, far more discussion on Schelling’s reception of Kant’s notion of ‘radical evil’ than can be treated here. As Florig makes clear, the central difference between the question of radical evil in Kant and Schelling is that Schelling establishes the question of good and evil in a worldprocess that he explicates in the notion of revelation of divine personhood. See Florig, *Schellings Theorie menschlicher Selbstformierung*, 141–177.

our properties and the organization of our character for the benefit of our decisions. When it comes to evil, this is what we fail to do properly.³²⁶

Florig's understanding of the universal will, as pertaining to fundamental convictions that can be nurtured, also relies on Schelling's interpretation of *religiosity*.³²⁷ Schelling describes religiosity as conscientiousness (*Gewissenhaftigkeit*) in the sense that one does not need to consult a law, but "that one act in accordance with what one knows and not contradict the light of cognition in one's conduct. [...] only the highest resoluteness in favor of what is right without any choice."³²⁸ Schelling thereby seeks to move beyond a Kantian rational ethics. Schelling does not even provide any particular ethics. And one way of seeing this is that it is the form of actions, in terms of character, and not the content that determines their value. This, however, is a form we can never get in our control. In this sense, good and evil are central to the self-formation of character.³²⁹ It is

³²⁶ "In der Sphäre des Handelns hingegen wird Scheidung zur Denkfigur, durch welsche die Entwicklung eines in seiner Entwicklung identisch bleibenden, menschlichen Subjekts gedacht wird. Diese Subjekt ist Geist, d.h. es verhält sich bewußt zu dieser Entwicklung, in dessen Verlauf es sich immer neu formiert, d.h. auf der Basis bestehender Eigenschaften neue entwickelt." Florig, *Schellings Theorie menschlicher Selbstformierung*, 139.

³²⁷ Schelling alludes to *re-ligare*. "Das Verhältniß beider Principien ist das einer Gebundenheit des finstern Principis (der Selbsttheit) an das Licht. Es sey uns erlaubt, dieß, der ursprünglichen Wortbedeutung nach, durch Religiosität auszudrücken." *SW*, VII 393.

³²⁸ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 57; *SW*, VII 393. See also Temilo van Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalismus: Schellings transzendente Hermeneutik der menschlichen Freiheit* (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2000), 268–270.

³²⁹ Many interpretations of the *Freiheitsschrift* draw more directly on the notion of good and evil than I do in my interpretation of personhood. See e.g. Günther Wenz or the rather famous interpretations in Otfried Höffe and Annemarie Pieper, *Über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Akademie-Verlag, 1995); Günther Wenz, "Das Böse und sein Grund. Zur Rezeptionsgeschichte von Schellings Freiheitsschrift 1809," *Philosophisch-historische Klasse. Abhandlungen.*, no. NF 137, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (2010). As I do not present an interpretation of Schelling's *Freiheitsschrift* per se, I am aware that I leave many intriguing aspects of the work unanswered. As mentioned, I primarily draw on Schelling's later ontological development. As argued by Ulrich Barth, the *Freiheitsschrift* must also be understood as a difficult work, because of Schelling's developing transition to a new emphasis of thought. This is seen in the many shifts between different vocabularies or levels of argumentation from very different contexts (e.g. *metaphysics*, *theology*, *ethics*, *anthropology*, *philosophy of nature*, and, not to forget, *mysticism*). This reflects that Schelling is in the middle of a crucial development that challenges his philosophical language. See Ulrich Barth, "Annäherungen an das Böse. Naturphilosophische Aspekte von Schellings Freiheitsschrift," in *Gott, Natur, Kunst und Geschichte. Schelling zwischen Identitätsphilosophie und Freiheitsschrift* (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2010), 171. Nevertheless, I am sure that this mixture is exactly what inspires a plethora of interpretations.

therefore also central to the formation of the world in which the person lives as a personal agent. Freedom is not just a matter of morality. The crux of Schelling's ontology of freedom is that freedom is the turningpoint of being and of the world of the person.³³⁰

Florig's larger exposition of self-formation also engages with the drafts of *Ages of the World*, in which Schelling presents an interesting notion of the 'communicability' (*Mittheilsamkeit*) of personhood. Schelling develops this issue in relation to the divine personhood, as the inherent ambition and need of the person for communicating its personality, its personal identity.³³¹ Florig emphasizes that Schelling portrays the potency of personhood with moral aspects because personhood always stands in a moral relation to other persons, a relation that is constitutive of its personhood.

The person is a person on interpersonal conditions. What is fundamental in the idea of 'person seeking person' is that the person requires another personal being (another person) to appropriate and communicate its personal being because concepts and principles cannot do that.³³² Fundamentally, personal being implies the relation of personal beings. The logical concept of being cannot articulate the aspect of the free, moral, and historical life of a person.³³³ Personhood is actualized within a dimension of mutual relations. Fundamentally, personhood is of such a kind that it is only actualized in response to the call of a personal being. Schelling has formulated this aspect in the concept of revelation as the communication of divine personhood, which is brought to the fore already in the *Freiheitsschrift*. "God can only reveal himself [*sich offenbar werden*] in what is like him, in free beings acting on their own, for whose Being there is no ground other than God but who are as God is. He speaks, and they are there."³³⁴ The request for a personal concept of being is therefore fulfilled

³³⁰ Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalismus*, 270.

³³¹ *SW*, VIII 210.

³³² "[...] so ist es auch das Ich, welches als selbst Persönlichkeit Persönlichkeit verlangt, eine Person fordert, die außer der Welt und über dem Allgemeinen, die ihn vernehme, ein Herz, das ihm gleich sey." *Ibid.*, XI 569.

³³³ In the last lectures of the *Philosophical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (especially lecture 24), Schelling discusses the dissonance of individuality and universality paradigmatically with regard to the state and moral law. As Schelling describes it, the human being withdraws to a contemplative life devoted to itself alone due to this dissonance. The desire for another concept of being, a personal concept of being, derives from the embeddedness of the person in the world. Because being provides the structure of the world, the person requires something more than general and universal concepts. The world must itself have the structure that can provide the basis of the self-consciousness of personal being.

³³⁴ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 18. "Gott aber kann nur sich offenbar werden in dem, was ihm ähnlich ist, in freien aus sich selbst handelnden Wesen; für deren Seyn es

in the conception of a divine person whose person is formed in history as a historically based self-relation.³³⁵ The concept of a personal God (God as relating to himself as a person in history) is a way of conceiving being as personal. The history of religion is therefore essential, and positive philosophy is, for the same reason, an exploration of the actual historical religions, the mythological, and the revealed. The history of religion reflects the way the human person has related to its own condition as a finite being. The history of religion is the history of consciousness.

Schelling's concept of revelation pertains particularly to Christianity. The central doctrine of Christianity is "alone the *person* of Christ."³³⁶ Buchheim's interpretation of Schelling's notion of personhood unfolds the concept of revelation in relation to what he calls the *empiricism of personhood*.³³⁷ It is a revelatory act that establishes personhood as an intersubjective potency *above* empirical nature. It is persons alone that reveal and recognize a person *as a person*, that is, as a potency contingent upon the nature *in which* a person presents itself. With the potency of *spirit*, the human person rises above, or stands apart from nature. "[T]here arises in him something higher, *spirit*."³³⁸ However, the person is still both in and of nature. It is a double nature of nature and spirit. In his *Stuttgart Lectures*, Schelling calls it a being "in the midst of nature, above nature."³³⁹ In the *Freiheitsschrift* he says:

Selfhood *as such* is spirit; or man is spirit as a selfish [*selbstisch*], particular being (separated from God)—precisely this connection constitutes personality. Since

keinen Grund gibt als Gott, die aber sind, sowie Gott ist. Er spricht, und sie sind da." *SW*, VII 347.

³³⁵ "[W]ir fordern, daß die Gottheit dem Bewußtseyn der Menschheit immer näher tritt; wir verlangen, daß sie nicht mehr bloß in ihrer Folge, sondern *selbst* ein Gegenstand des Bewußtseyns wird; aber auch dahin ist nur stufenweise zu gelangen [...]. In diesem Sinne vorzüglich auch ist die positive Philosophie *geschichtliche* Philosophie." *SW*, XI 571.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, XIV 35. A central aspect is the understanding of the revelation as a free act because the person is the implication of freedom. For an informative study in Schelling's Christology and the concept of the personal God in Schelling see Christian Danz, "Der Gedanke der Persönlichkeit Gottes," in "*Alle Persönlichkeit ruht auf einem dunklen Grunde*": *Schellings Philosophie der Personalität*, ed. Thomas Buchheim (Akademie-Verlag, 2004), p. 179-195; Christian Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings* (Stuttgart Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1996).

³³⁷ Buchheim, "Grundlinien von Schellings Personbegriff." Buchheim's interpretation focus on the aspects that Schelling took personhood to be something that can only be encountered in experience. "Alles Persönliche kann nur dadurch ins Denken einbezogen werden, dass es ihm nicht ein gedachtes Objekt, sondern vielmehr dem Denkenden ein empirisches Gegenüber, d.h. eine andere Person außer ihm ist und als solche genommen wird." Buchheim, "Grundlinien von Schellings Personbegriff," 13.

³³⁸ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 32; Schelling, *SW*, VII 364.

³³⁹ *SW*, VII 458.

selfhood is spirit, however, it is at the same time raised from the creaturely into what is above the creaturely; it is will that beholds itself in complete freedom, being no longer an instrument of the productive [*schaffenden*] universal will in nature, but rather above and outside of all nature.³⁴⁰

What Buchheim takes Schelling's empiricism of the person to imply is that the revelatory manifestation of a person is no mere phenomenon, but something that can only be perceived by what is itself above nature. "Nature shows itself, a person reveals itself – but only to such that is itself capable of exceeding nature."³⁴¹ Revelation is descriptive of the interrelation of persons as the empirical relation of persons.³⁴² In the revelation of personhood the person is perceived in nature. However, nature cannot provide the revelation. Only free acts can do that. Hence, the person reveals itself through the actions assigned to it as a person.

These aspects of 'person seeking person' underlie various aspects of the interpersonal dimensions of personhood. However, in that context the question at issue is still that of the intelligible world. A person inhabits the world in a plethora of ways, all of which contribute to the multi-faceted being of an (social, moral, emotional, historical etc.) individual person. The totality of the aspects that contribute to a person's self-understanding is *a world* in which the person lives as a person. This shows itself in the mutual determination of person and world: the person-making world and the world-making person.

7.4 Personhood and World

As already described, the role of experience moves to the fore within Schelling's ontology of freedom in a way that is slightly different from the epistemological aspects treated in the early philosophy of nature. The ontology of freedom does not simply re-approach a traditional question of

³⁴⁰ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 33. "Die Selbstheit *als* solche ist Geist, oder der Mensch ist Geist als ein selbstisches, besonderes (von Gott geschiedenes) Wesen, welche Verbindung eben die Persönlichkeit ausmacht. Dadurch aber, daß die Selbstheit Geist ist, ist sie zugleich aus dem Creatürlichen ins Uebercreatürliche gehoben, sie ist Wille, der sich selbst in der völligen Freiheit erblickt, nicht mehr Werkzeug des in der Natur schaffenden Universalwillens, sondern über und außer aller Natur ist." Schelling, *SW*, VII 364.

³⁴¹ "Ein empirisches Verhältnis zu einer Person gibt es nach Schelling also nur durch 'Überwindung' oder Überschreitung der Natur, in der sie sich darbietet. Die Empirie der Person ist deshalb nach Schelling wesentlich "Offenbarung" oder "Manifestation", nicht bloßes Phänomen oder empirische Erscheinung allein. Die Natur zeigt sich, eine Person offenbart sich – aber nur dem, der selbst in der Lage ist, Natur zu überschreiten." Buchheim, "Grundlinien von Schellings Personbegriff," 15.

³⁴² "Sobald also überhaupt Offenbarung stattfindet, sind mehrere Personen in einem Verhältnis miteinander, in dem sie sich gegenseitig als Personen wahrnehmen." *Ibid.*, 20.

being, but seeks clarification on the status of being in terms of *the being* that is engaged with the determination of being. This is the ontological situation in which the question of the human being becomes essential. In his early period, Schelling was already aware that the human being is the “visible and wandering problem of all philosophy,”³⁴³ and his later thinking still echoed this problem. Within the ontology of freedom, the central aspect of the unity of being and freedom is that being becomes determinate on the premises of the human being as a person. A passage discussed earlier can illuminate this point further:

Thus far from man and his endeavors making the world comprehensible, it is man himself that is the most incomprehensible and who inexorably drives me to the belief in the wretchedness of all being, a belief that makes itself known in so many bitter pronouncements from both ancient and recent times. It is precisely Him, the human, who drives me to the final desperate question: Why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing?³⁴⁴

The human being, as the human being that attempts to make the world comprehensible, escapes our understanding. The human being is that part of the world that cannot be made comprehensible. The human being, *in being*, attempts to make being comprehensible. This is precisely the feature of the human being that escapes our understanding. The human being, *as the basis of a comprehensible world*, is elusive. Consequently, the human being cannot be understood through concepts and, furthermore, cannot be understood isolated from its attempt to conceptualize the world.

Schelling articulates the wretchedness of all being through experiences of human existence. These can be thought of as experiences of the human being itself. These experiences reflect the emotional and moral aspects of the embeddedness of human existence in the world. Schelling describes several emotional aspects, both figuratively (e.g. when he speaks of the yearning of the absolute), as well as more directly with regard to the human self-relation (e.g. anxiety). These more ambiguous aspects do not compromise the idea of the propositional structures of judgment. Temilo van Zantwijk proposes an understanding of this as premonition or presentiment in the form of an emotional sense that first becomes a part of discourse in the form of judgments.³⁴⁵ This does not make emotions reducible to any judgmental form. Judgments are produced by the

³⁴³ *SW*, II 54.

³⁴⁴ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 94. “Weit entfernt also, daß der Mensch und sein Thun die Welt begreiflich mache, ist er selbst das Unbegreiflichste, und treibt mich unausbleiblich zu der Meinung von der Unseligkeit alles Seyns, einer Meinung, die in so vielen schmerzlichen Lauten aus alter und neuer Zeit sich kundgegeben. Gerade Er, der Mensch, treibt mich zur letzten verzweiflungsvollen Frage: warum ist überhaupt etwas? warum ist nicht nichts?” *SW*, XIII 7.

³⁴⁵ Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalism*, 274.

propositional capacities of the (same) person experiencing the emotions. However, the articulation of emotions, or the role they can be assigned within meaningful discourse, requires a minimal awareness that will always be in the form of a judgment. Schelling indicates, in the opening to the *Freiheitsschrift* for example, that the freedom (as a fact) is something felt.

[...] the *fact of freedom*, no matter how immediately *the feeling* of which is imprinted in every individual, lies in no way so fully on the surface that, in order merely to express it in words, an uncommon clarity and depth of mind would not be required.³⁴⁶

Another is when Schelling speaks of *madness*. In the *Stuttgart Private Lectures*, Schelling asserts that the rational mind, the understanding, derives from an irrational ground, which is that which is without understanding.³⁴⁷

The basis of the understanding [*Verstand*] is itself the madness. That is why the madness is a necessary element that simply does not appear and simply should not be actualized. What we call understanding, when it is real, living and active understanding is nothing but madness that is *brought to order* [*geregelter Wahnsinn*]. The understanding can only manifest and show itself in its opposite, that is, in that which is without understanding [*im Verstandlosen*].³⁴⁸

This is not merely an inner felt irrational depth. Schelling assigns this depth to reality as such, to anything that can become intelligible and propositionally lucid. In Högrefe's view, Schelling's notion of madness in *Ages of the World* plays an important role.³⁴⁹ Högrefe's reading explores

³⁴⁶ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 9. My italics. "[...] die Thatsache der Freiheit, so unmittelbar das Gefühl derselben einem jeden eingeprägt ist, doch keineswegs so sehr an der Oberfläche liegt, daß nicht, um sie auch nur in Worten auszudrücken, eine mehr als gewöhnliche Reinheit und Tiefe des Sinns erfordert würde." *SW*, 336.

³⁴⁷ "Was ist der Geist des Menschen? Antwort: Ein Seyendes, aber aus dem Nichtseyenden, also der Verstand aus dem Verstandlosen. Was ist also die *Basis* des menschlichen Geistes in dem Sinn, in welchem wir das Wort Basis nehmen? Antwort: Das Verstandlose." *SW*, VII 469.

³⁴⁸ "Die Basis des Verstandes selbst also ist der Wahnsinn. Daher der Wahnsinn ein nothwendiges Element, das aber nur nicht zum Vorschein kommen, nur nicht actualisirt werden soll. Was wir Verstand nennen, wenn es wirklicher, lebendiger, aktiver Verstand ist, ist eigentlich nichts als *geregelter* Wahnsinn. Der Verstand kann sich nur manifestiren, zeigen in seinem Gegensatz, also im Verstandlosen." *Ibid.*, VII 470.

³⁴⁹ In *Ages of the World*, Schelling describes this understanding as bringing ease to an 'inner restlessness.' "Wie das Naturleben im Menschen, wenn es die höhere geistige Potenz nicht finden kann, der innern Unruhe, jener Hin- und Her-Bewegung ohne Sinn und Zweck, die das Eigenthümliche des Wahnsinns ist, anheimfällt: so scheint im Großen die Erde ihre Gliederung, den Einklang aller ihrer Schöpfungen und damit die Ruhe erst gefunden zu haben, nachdem sich das Natürliche in ihr bis zur Berührung mit dem Geistigen durch den Menschen erhoben. Aber auch im natürlichen Leben findet

this work as a speculative account of the genesis of reason and the emergence of rationality from a preceding irrationality or madness, the sub-semantic. By understanding the fundamental *will* of the free human being as a *will to knowledge*, Hogrebe explores the conditions of intelligibility as the conditions of the meaningful world. He takes Schelling to promote the notion of the human being as an *interpretational being* (*Deutungswesen*). In his reading of Schelling, Hogrebe therefore employs a concept of the *mantic* developed elsewhere.³⁵⁰ The *mantic* is what precedes the *semantic*. The mantic means ‘premonition’, or, in German, ‘*Ahnung*’, and it is a central part of the impressions that precede a direct propositional articulation, which the human being, as a ‘*Deutungswesen*’, provides.³⁵¹ The basic components of madness underlie the semantic dimension as that out of which clear(-er) semantic cognition comes about.

They [the components of madness] anticipate the complete semantic dimension that is provided by consciousness and hold the connection to something that this dimension always only claims but never provides itself: the orientation by a something. This ‘mad’ mantic relation is something that lets us be oriented by unity, provided we want to arrange our semantic relations uni-vocally. Since we are always semantically biased through the endeavors of this arrangement, the deep lying semantic relation rarely comes in view.³⁵²

Hogrebe points out that Schelling takes the sensorial capacities of the human being to be sensitivities to facticity, that is, sensible components beyond the semantic dimension. The human being is fundamentally beyond

sich eine solche Folge von Zuständen, da immer der vorhergehende dem folgenden zur Vergangenheit wird.” Ibid., VIII 260–261. Another place Schelling says, “Wo aber kein Wahnsinn, ist freilich auch kein rechter, wirkender, lebendiger Verstand (daher auch der todtte Verstand, todtte Verstandes-Menschen); denn worin soll sich der Verstand beweisen als in der Bewältigung, Beherrschung und Regelung des Wahnsinns?” *SW*, VIII 338.

³⁵⁰ Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 118–126; Wolfram Hogrebe, *Ahnung und Erkenntnis* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996); Wolfram Hogrebe, *Mantik* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005).

³⁵¹ “Denn der ursprüngliche Wahnsinn, von dem hier die Rede ist, ist die mantische Voraussetzung für die Entstehung eines sich selbst semantisch organisierenden Bewußtseins und bleibt als diese Voraussetzung die wirksame Energiequelle seiner bloß dissipativen Struktur, die eben deshalb immer gefährdet bleibt.” Hogrebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 119.

³⁵² “Sie [die Wahnkomponente] greift nämlich der gesamten semantischen Dimension, die sich das Bewußtsein erarbeitet, voraus und halt den Anschluß an etwas, was diese Dimension immer nur in Anspruch nimmt, aber nicht selbst erzeugt: die Orientierung an Irgendeinem. Dieser “wahnsinnige” mantische Bezug ist etwas, was uns an Einheit orientiert sein läßt, wenn wir unsere semantischen Verhältnisse eindeutig ordnen wollen. Weil wir durch die Bemühungen um diese Ordnung gewissermaßen immer Semantisch befangen sind, gerät dieser tieferliegende mantische Bezug selten in den Blick.” Ibid., 120.

itself, or outside of the dimension in which the human being relates to itself. Hoguebe takes Schelling to promote a view so radical that the human being, in every conscious moment, comes to itself from beyond itself. Consciousness consists of an arrival at oneself from beyond oneself. In this regard, *thatness* shows itself as primary, as the state from which meaning arises in the coming-to-itself of consciousness from beyond itself. The movement of consciousness is not *from* the world, it is from the indeterminate, which is different from and beyond thought. In the introduction to *Philosophy of Mythology*, Schelling describes this as an ecstatic being of reason:

Reason can posit being in which there is still nothing of a concept, of a whatness, only as something that is absolutely *outside itself* (of course only in order to acquire it thereafter, a posteriori, as its content, and in this way to return to itself at the same time). In this positing, reason is therefore set outside itself, absolutely ecstatic.³⁵³

According to this ‘concept’ (or non-concept) of factic existence, the human being is beyond itself in being beyond the meaning it has of existing things in their pre-conceptual being. Hoguebe calls it the “ecstasy of reason in its pronominal relation to something.”³⁵⁴ To the extent that this ecstatic movement of reason is primary (from outside of itself), Schelling’s notion of madness becomes all the more clear. The pre-predicative and unarranged is that from which thinking arrives at a meaningful concept.

The world applies to the conditions of intelligibility of determinate things. Even though the concept of world is often understood as the infinite totality of all there is, the world can here be understood only within a distinction between background and foreground, between the world and the contents of the world. The world is an ‘ultimate background’ that enables the foreground of meaning. When the issue in question is that of a world of determinate things, then the concept of the world is inevitably written into the setting as the premises that enable the foreground to build a meaningful whole. Hence, the world is the background that is never in sight, always covered by the foreground of meaning.³⁵⁵ It is in thinking that the background and the foreground differentiate themselves; without the thinking person there would be no foreground.

The world, as a background or as a semantic domain that enables the determination of objects (the content of the world), is not itself an object.

³⁵³ Schelling, *The Grounding of Positive Philosophy*, 207. “Die Vernunft kann das in dem noch nichts von einem Begriff, von einem Was ist, nur als ein absolutes *Außer-sich* setzen (freilich nur, um es hintennach, a posteriori, wieder als ihren Inhalt zu gewinnen, und so zugleich selbst in sich zurückzukehren), die Vernunft ist daher in diesem Setzen außer sich gesetzt, absolut ekstatisch.” *SW*, VIII 162–163.

³⁵⁴ Hoguebe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 122.

³⁵⁵ Wolfram Hoguebe, *Das Absolute* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1998), 5.

When we think the world it withdraws. The world is the condition of sense-making. The things that exist in the world do not themselves bring about the world, and yet nothing exists without a world. In thinking, the world is posited. From the sub-semantic and unprethinkable being reason sets out “to establish a ground in advance”³⁵⁶ of determination.

So, why is there anything at all? Why is there not nothing? This question follows the idea of the question: ‘Why is there sense, why is there not rather non-sense?’ The point is that the fact that there is sense, that there is being, is a fact *to* the human being. The entire question of sense rests on the human being alone. The ‘endeavors making the world comprehensible’ that Schelling applies to the human being refers us to the condition that the work of sense-making is a work of the human being, and that the work of the human being is a work of making the world comprehensible. To make sense of non-sense is the work of a free act that is willed. Nothing is provided by necessity or *a priori*. Will is the only ground of being. “Will is primal Being.”³⁵⁷ The contingency of being implies that being cannot be the object of *a priori* knowledge. It can only be captured by experience. “What proceeds from a will, and therefore is contingent, as it could be as well as not be, can only be experienced, and not, as it is said, be known *a priori*.”³⁵⁸

The notion of personhood pertains to the role of experience because the self-consciousness of the person reflects an experience of the world and of the fundamental difficulty of getting hold of the world due to the fact that the person is itself part of that world. The fact of sense is therefore not only a fact that there is a world, but that this world shows itself to be incomplete and contingent. In the metaphor of the ‘web of reason,’ Schelling seeks to show in what sense the world is not what is original, but a web that carries propositional meaning.

In his Munich lectures, entitled *Grounding of Positive Philosophy* (1832-33), Schelling describes this experience of the contingency of the world: “[The] first impression [that this]... so highly contingent thing we call the world [makes on us]... can in no way be an impression of something that

³⁵⁶ Schulz describes this experience: “Die sich in der Möglichkeit ihres Setzens begreifen wollende Vernunft scheitert: sie erkennt die Unbegreiflichkeit ihrer selbst, denn ihrem Denken kommt das factum brutum ihres reinen *Daß* schon immer zuvor. Aber diese negative Erkenntnis birgt die positive Einsicht in sich: die Vernunft erfährt, daß sie sich voraus einen Grund setzen muß, der, an ihm selbst nie in das Denken eintretend, die ständige Möglichkeit ihres Setzens ist.” Schulz, *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*, 7.

³⁵⁷ *SW*, VII 351.

³⁵⁸ “[W]as die Folge eines Willens, und demnach zufällig ist, da es ebenso gut nicht seyn könnte, kann bloß erfahren, nicht wie man sagt *a priori* gewußt werden.” *Ibid.*, XI 579.

has emerged through the *necessity of reason*.³⁵⁹ He continues: “*In every respect the world looks much less than a product of pure reason. It contains such a preponderant mass of that which is not reason, that one could almost say that what is rational is what is accidental.*”³⁶⁰ The experience is not an experience of an object, but an experience of the human being as embedded in a reality that is grounded on the act of determination and not on a necessary or eternal absolute.

The world is a limit. The world, as a semantic structure (as opposed to an uncontrollable mess of madness), emerges in the rational response to an unprethinkable otherness beyond the boundaries of reason. Gabriel points to this as the transcendence of freedom. Freedom needs a limit that it can exceed and to which it comports itself. Without something given, transcendence would have nothing to go beyond.³⁶¹ The world derives from the transcendence that is the ascent to the semantic. In this respect, Schelling presents personhood in reference points to the person of God:

The whole of nature tells us that it in no way exists by virtue of a merely geometrical necessity; in it there is not simply pure reason but personality and spirit. [...] The creation is not an occurrence but an act. *There are no results from general laws; rather, God, that is, the person of God, is the general law, and everything that happens, happens by virtue of the personality of God.*³⁶²

In the notion of a personal God the world is semantically structured. At this stage (1809), Schelling seeks to posit his system on the terms that personhood is the principle (or rather, the non-principle) of the system. Schelling develops his notion of system from a notion of the rational composition of being as *the transparency of being itself*, a transparency that is informed by the limits of reason. In the *Freiheitsschrift*, this is seen in the way Schelling explicates the notion of system with the terminology of *life, vitality, and personality*.³⁶³ The point of the onto-theological discourse in the ontology of freedom is the explication of the central aspect of personhood and the transformation of being (unprethinkable being) into selfhood on the terms of real living persons. Schelling’s concern with historicity turns the focus to the meaning human beings actually have of the world, in which he sees that the human being necessarily inhabits the world on the terms of personhood, as reflected in the person of God. In positive

³⁵⁹ Schelling, *Grundlegung der positiven Philosophie. Münchner Vorlesung WS 1832/33 und SS 1833*, 99.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁶¹ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 89.

³⁶² *SW*, VII 395f. My italics.

³⁶³ E.g. “Gott selbst ist kein System, sondern ein Leben,” *Ibid.*, VII 399.

philosophy, the human being is determined as a God-positing creature.³⁶⁴ The divine personhood is therefore an expression of ‘what’ makes sense to the human being, considering that the world-experience reveals the world as contingent.

In his monograph entitled *Pan-Personalism*, Temilo van Zantwijk has proposed that the onto-theological aspect of Schelling’s thinking entails a transcendental hermeneutics of human freedom, which Zantwijk develops in discussion with Heidegger’s, Theunissen’s, and Hennigfeld’s reading of the *Freiheitsschrift*.³⁶⁵ Zantwijk takes the uncommunicativeness (*Unvermittelbarkeit*) of freedom as the principle for an interpretation of human existence. This reading is concerned with the aporia that the attempt to understand human existence struggles with, something that in itself counters the premises of understanding. Freedom, as the basis of all determinate being, is impenetrable and, when all is said and done, carries the traces of the unprethinkable as “the indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather

³⁶⁴ Besides the revelatory relation of God and the human being, Schelling later develops this idea of the human being as a God-positing creature in the course of his *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (especially in the eighth lecture). Here he says: “Man has in his *original* essence no other meaning but to be the God-positing nature because he only existed originally in order to be this God-positing creature [...]” Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, *Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 129. “[...] weil der Mensch in seinem *ursprünglichen* Wesen keine andere Bedeutung hat, als die, die Gott-setzende Natur zu seyn, weil er ursprünglich nur existirt, um dieses Gott-setzende Wesen zu seyn [...]” *SW*, XI 185. As presented by Gabriel, this idea offers an interpretational key to Schelling’s onto-theology that applies to his middle-period as well. Schelling establishes, in the notion of God, the feature of self-consciousness of the world, and therefore a self-relation of the world, which comes about in and through the human being. From the history of God-positing thinking, Schelling draws the history of consciousness of being as such. God is therefore essential to Schelling’s understanding of subjectivity, an understanding reflected in the notion of personhood. See Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 234–367.

³⁶⁵ Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalism*, esp. 145–272. Zantwijk reads Schelling’s *Freiheitsschrift* almost exclusively from within the context of the pantheism controversy. I definitely think that this controversy was important for many of Schelling’s reflections, but not nearly as decisive as assumed by Zantwijk. In taking this course, Zantwijk follows the discussion on system much closer than I have intended. The point of Schelling’s discussion on system, as I see it, is the discovery of its incompatibility with human freedom. I contend that the later development of his ontology in terms of the historical concept of being reflects what could not be achieved with the rational system.

remains eternally in the ground.”³⁶⁶ Personhood is therefore the non-conceptual ground of conceptual determination.³⁶⁷ Zantwijk further says:

Personhood is only immediately recognizable [*anschaulich*] and immediately sensible and not a concept. There can be no adequate definition of the person. However, the person stands the concept nearer than life. *It is the concept-positing life.* [...] The person is productive spirit.³⁶⁸

Schelling initially employed the notion of productivity in his early philosophy of nature (especially *On the World-Soul*, 1798). However, as Zantwijk aims to show, personhood provides the basis for a transcendental-hermeneutical ontology in parallel to that which is here drawn from Högbe's reading of Schelling's ontology of predication.

The world, as something the human being seeks to understand as meaningful, is itself a result of fallible freedom. It is neither ‘emerged through the necessity of reason’ nor the ‘result of general laws.’ Schelling articulates world-consciousness, on the basis of personhood, as the only lens that can recognize that the world is not the result of general laws. The world-experience can be said to reveal that the semantic structures are always limited and always applied from a personal perspective, from a *position*. The fundamental experience of the contingency of being in the world manifests the condition of position as the condition of embeddedness in the world without an available absolute ground, that is, with a ground that withdraws. The world is therefore never experienced as complete. This is a fundamental experience of groundlessness. Schelling explains this ambience of groundlessness as an “anxiety of life [*Angst des Lebens*].”³⁶⁹ The consciousness of the groundlessness is the condition of finite being as groundless being. Moreover, this experience provides the insight that the human being cannot change this condition. Schelling takes this condition to be the basic condition of finite existence. Schelling even calls it *personal existence*.

All existence demands a condition so that it may become real, namely personal existence [...] Man never gains control over the condition, although in evil he strives to do so; it is only lent to him, and is independent from him; hence, his personality and selfhood can never rise to full actuality [*zum Aktus*]. This is the sadness that

³⁶⁶ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 29; *SW*, VII 360.

³⁶⁷ Zantwijk calls this aspect of personhood, as semantic ground, the *horizon of personhood* or the *personal organization*. “So vollzieht sich nach Schelling jede begriffliche Bestimmung von etwas als etwas bereits im Horizont der Personalität und ist eine bestimmte personale Organisation dieses Grundes unter unendlich vielen anderen.” Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalismus*, 219.

³⁶⁸ *Ibid.* My italics.

³⁶⁹ *SW*, VII 381. The English translation reads “fear of life.” Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 47.

clings to all finite life [...] Hence, the veil of dejection that is spread over all nature, the deep indestructible melancholy of all life.³⁷⁰

The world is marked by the contingency that is the condition of personal existence. This is a condition of freedom, or rather, a condition of the fallibility of freedom. The meaningful world is a product of predicative acts. Unprethinkable being is never dissolved, never left behind or beneath, which means that “anarchy still lies in the ground, as if it could break through once again.”³⁷¹ The act of predication brings an object and a concept into relation because they are not inherently related. The fact that our predication makes the object, as object, available, decisively makes our relationship to objects fallible.

Schelling points to the fundamental lack of an absolute point of reference for knowledge in the form of a grounding principle, a principle of the absolute. In these terms the person is itself a “derived absoluteness or divinity.”³⁷² Consequently, conceptually established relations are without absolute guarantees. That freedom is a non-conceptual constituting moment of being implies that the transition from unprethinkable being to determinate being can never be illuminated. More radically, there is “no transition from the absolutely undetermined to the determined.”³⁷³ The transition in judgment, as a ‘potentialization,’ is an act of determination in which the differentiation and even the idea of distinction lies only in the will.

The primacy of the person implied in what Schelling calls ‘personal existence’ is a practical primacy. The will, as the ground of the sense-dimension of all being, cannot be conceptually anticipated, only stated belatedly. “The understanding is born in the genuine sense from that which is without understanding. Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance.”³⁷⁴ Freedom shows itself as an ontological problem insofar as it cannot be made transparent on the premises of being. The problem is the non-transparency of freedom.

³⁷⁰ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 62. “Alle Existenz fordert eine Bedingung, damit sie wirkliche, nämlich persönliche Existenz werde [...] Der Mensch bekommt die Bedingung nie in seine Gewalt, ob er gleich im Bösen darnach strebt; sie ist eine ihm nur geliehene, von ihm unabhängige; daher sich seine Persönlichkeit und Selbstheit nie zum vollkommenen Actus erheben kann. Dieß ist die allem endlichen Leben anklebende Traurigkeit [...] Daher der Schleier der Schwermuth, der über die ganze Natur ausgebreitet ist, die tiefe unzerstörliche Melancholie alles Lebens. Freude muß Leid haben, Leid in Freude verklärt werden.” *SW*, VII 399.

³⁷¹ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 29; *SW*, VII 359.

³⁷² Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 18. “[D]erivierten Absolutheit oder Göttlichkeit.” *SW*, VII 347.

³⁷³ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 49; *SW*, VII 384.

³⁷⁴ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 29; *SW*, VII 360.

Nevertheless, freedom is active, neither absolute nor grounded on anything absolute. Freedom is contingent upon a process that is not itself part of freedom. This fundamental heteronomy of autonomy implies that the possibilities of choices are not themselves chosen. They are always given. The free person always comports itself towards something that it has not posited.³⁷⁵ This is the unprethinkable being of the person, its situatedness. There is a central part of the sense-making of the person that is not in the hands of the person, including the most fundamental part, namely, its own personal being as the domain of sense and intelligibility.

That the person has no other ground of the world than its own personal being means that it can only make sense of things to the extent that it can integrate them into a semantic coherence of its own personal being. This means that the way one is a person pertains to the way one discloses one's surroundings as the inventory of a meaningful world. This ontological situation is the inhabitation of the world. Inhabitation, as the mutual process of world-shaping person and person-shaping world, is never complete. The unity of the world, as something that depends on personhood, is incomplete or ongoing, because the contingency of being implies 'the possibility of another being.' Personhood, as the free predicative agent, is this possibility. This is the central aspect of Schelling's ontology of freedom, presenting personhood as the ground of the world on the basis of human living in the world.³⁷⁶

The onto-theological background (and method) with which Schelling develops his ontology of freedom describes, in the notion of God, *the self-referential structure of the world*.³⁷⁷ The idea is that being becomes conscious of itself in taking a determinate form through the rational

³⁷⁵ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 89.

³⁷⁶ Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalismus*, 275.

³⁷⁷ Gabriel interprets Schelling's notion of God as *the becoming of the domain of intelligibility* as a fact of sense-making that is beyond one's control. See Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 82. That is, the determination of beings, as part of a world, pertains to a unity that is ultimately personal. A quote from the *Freiheitsschrift* further supports this reading: "Only in man, therefore, is the word fully proclaimed which in all other things is held back and incomplete. But spirit, that is, *God* as existing actually, reveals itself in the proclaimed word" (VII 364f). Schelling's onto-theological framework consists of far more than that. One of the central aspects of his employment of a theological subtext (which exceeds the aim of this study) is that Schelling, in the person of God, not only wants to explain the structural composition of a transcendental ontology, but to ask for and propose underlying *motifs* for the person of God to step out of his initial unity or indifference. This is a deeper lying consideration that discloses the circular movements in which God is made accountable for the ontological conditions as a moral being. A central example of this level of discourse is the theodicy that Schelling develops in the *Freiheitsschrift*. Interpreters treat this theodicy rather differently, e.g. Zantwijk believes that Schelling, independent of his transcendental ontology, directly fails at this level. See Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalismus*, 228–259.

capacities of the human being. The free human being is not God, but the ground of the self-consciousness of being that is God. Schelling calls it “that which in God himself is not *He Himself* [...] that which is the ground of his existence.”³⁷⁸ Moreover, this is the pantheistic principle that provides that ‘all things are in God.’ Everything is determined, and, as such, exists on the basis of the semantic unity of being and thought.

As a result of this notion of God Schelling was accused of anthropomorphism. Schelling found his writings highly misunderstood, not because he thought that God was understood as personal, but because Schelling claimed to have shown why this was not a problem.³⁷⁹ For Schelling, the notion of personal existence implies that the highest being can *only* be a personal being. The human person and the divine person should not be understood apart from each other in the way anthropomorphism implies. The deep intertwinement of the human being and the world, *as expressed in divine nature*, is exactly what the notion of personhood seeks to make lucid.³⁸⁰

Schelling establishes the theoretical premise of incorporating the conditions of possibility for having a notion of the world into the notion of

³⁷⁸ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 28. Schelling also says “This ground of his existence, which God has in himself, is not God considered absolutely, that is, in so far as he exists; for it is only the ground of his existence.” Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 27. “Dieser Grund seiner Existenz, den Gott in sich hat, ist nicht Gott absolut betrachtet, d.h. sofern er existiert; denn er ist ja nur der Grund seiner Existenz, Er ist die *Natur* – in Gott; ein von ihm zwar unabtrennliches, aber doch unterschiedenes Wesen.” *SW*, VII 358.

³⁷⁹ In a personal letter from Schelling’s consistently critical yet faithful reader, the Tübingen professor Karl August Eschenmayer (18 October 1810), Schelling was presented with an objection of anthropomorphism based on the descriptions of divine nature in the *Freiheitsschrift*. The correspondence is printed in *SW*, VIII 145–189. This was a highly disputed subject of the time as the question whether “the only possible system of reason is pantheism” (*SW*, VII 338.) and furthermore whether this system inevitably leads to fatalism, or more specifically, excludes human freedom and divine personhood. Schelling refused the critique because it presumes a concept of personhood independent of the notion of God: “Diese ganze Argumentation ist mit der Kantischen Philosophie zugleich veraltet, und sollte billig nicht mehr gehört werden. Wenn wir sagen: Gott darf nicht nach menschlichen Begriffen gedacht werden, so machen wir die Beschaffenheit unserer menschlichen Begriffe – nur zum negativen Maß der Gottheit, wie Protagoras das wirklich bloß Subjektive des Menschen zum Maß aller Dinge machte.” *SW*, VIII 168. See also Jochem Hennigfeld, “Der Mensch im absoluten System: Anthropologische Ansätze in der Philosophie Schellings,” in *Schellings philosophische Anthropologie*, ed. Jörg Jantzen and Peter L. Oesterreich (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002), 1–22.

³⁸⁰ “Entweder überall keinen Anthropomorphismus [...] oder einen unbeschränkten Anthropomorphismus, eine durchgängige und (den einzigen Punkt des nothwendigen Seyns ausgenommene) totale Vermenschlichung Gottes” *SW*, VIII 167.

the world.³⁸¹ Construed from a theoretical perspective, we could say that the concept of the world is a second-level achievement by a reflective move initiated at the first level (from within the world), namely, by the person. The entire question of 'origin' and 'beginning' hinges on this premise that the question of the world can only be raised from within the world. Schelling's employment of the notion of God establishes that being, in the widest sense ('all there is,' the totality of being), becomes transparent to itself in a *self-relation*.

It is within this understanding of the world, as God, that we can understand the statement that there is something in God that is not God but *the ground of His existence*.³⁸² If God designates the self-reference of being in its determination, then God is not the point of departure for this self-reference, the human being is. This being in God is the free, individual human being, *the person*. This sets the human being apart from things in the world in a decisive way. "Only man is in God and capable of freedom exactly through this Being-in-God [*in-Gott-Sein*]. [...] just as God only accepts nature and ties it to himself through man."³⁸³ Because God is the self-reference of the totality of being only the human being can be said to be *in* God, because only the human being is a world-inhabitor. World-inhabitation resides in the capacity and disposition to reach out for the world, beyond itself, a movement that grounds the semantic dimension as the necessary basis of determination.

In Schelling's notion of *existence* lies the idea that the world entails structures that are mutually incompatible. On the one hand, this reflects the unity of the world on the basis of fallible freedom, and on the other hand, this is the inevitable vital character of a human life. The world, as a living system, is not a system of principles, but of particularities: persons. The full scope of personhood includes the co-existence of persons as particular, yet mutually relating, depending, and affirming beings. The scope of personhood is the fate of a finite being in the way its particularity stands in dependent relations beyond its particularity. Personhood is a way of filling out one's personal identity through these relations. Stability of identity requires a world that, though always in danger of incompatible structures,

³⁸¹ This is a central claim that shows the foundation of Gabriel's appropriation of Hogrebe's thought. See Gabriel, *Das Absolute und die Welt in Schellings Freiheitsschrift*.

³⁸² *SW*, VII, 359. "Gott selbst, damit er seyn kann, bedarf eines Grundes, nur daß dieser nicht außer ihm, sondern in ihm ist, und hat in sich eine *Natur*, die, obgleich zu ihm selbst gehörig, doch von ihm verschieden ist" *SW*, VII, 375. Here it shows that thinking is the ground of God in God by having *the world* as its content, in *nature*.

³⁸³ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 72. "Nur der Mensch ist in Gott, und eben durch dieses in-Gott-Seyn der Freiheit fähig. Er allein ist ein Centralwesen und soll darum auch im Centro bleiben. In ihm sind alle Dinge erschaffen, so wie Gott nur durch den Menschen auch die Natur annimmt und mit sich verbindet." *SW*, 411.

can ground the life and living of the human person. Hence, the world is the world of personhood in the sense of always being in danger of semantic restraints. This is the “fear of life,”³⁸⁴ what the human being has as the basic motivation for seeking a proper life, a threat to semantic stability. The existence and consistency of the world is in the hands of personal living and the formation of a personal life, that is, in the hands of the person as the world-inhabitor. The world-inhabitor alone possesses the capacity to transcend its particularity towards totality, which is the transcendent movement that constitutes the world of a personal living. The world exists within the transcendent movements of the world-inhabitor, in the space inhabited. Therefore, personhood is itself the vulnerability to meaninglessness. As Schelling says: “Only in personality is there life, and all personality rests on a dark ground that indeed must therefore be the ground of cognition as well.”³⁸⁵

7.5 In Summation

It is important to understand in what sense personhood is more than an anthropology. Personhood is an *ontological situation* in the sense that the human being is situated in relation to being, as well as situated *in* being. Likewise, being is understood as something that can only be determined on the basis of the world-positing human being. The notion of personhood serves to characterize *the way* in which the human being is understood as being enrolled in the question of being as the determination of the world. Obviously, personhood also pertains to many other aspects that could be the object of a strict anthropological reading. The significant aim of this reading has been to show that the development and condition of human personhood is enrolled in a sense-making process. In what follows I shall attempt to draw a concise picture of how the human being relates to the world in fifteen steps.

1. Schelling’s notion of personhood is developed in the context of his ontology of freedom, which he explicates and defends with an ontology of predication. The central ambition of Schelling’s turn to freedom is to break free from a logical concept of being that understands being as determinacy; Schelling develops a new concept of being that is characterized as historical and contingent to serve this purpose.

2. From the ontology of predication the question of intelligibility becomes central, which brings us into the semantic question of *how being makes sense*, and what the true ground of sense is. There is no rational ground beyond the propositional structure provided by thought. Beyond thought there is only unprethinkable being. Sense is grounded in freedom

³⁸⁴ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 47; *SW*, VII 381.

³⁸⁵ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 75; *SW*, VII 413f.

by the *act* of predication. The Kantian assumption that the structure of determinacy is judgmental is, in this regard, combined with Schelling's emphasis on freedom: judgment provides the semantic dimension that underlies the domain of existence, that is, the domain that enables that something can be recognized as existing. Only *actual existence*, what Schelling calls the factic *that*, cannot be made sense of *a priori*. It must be accepted as a fact residing outside of reason. From the ontology of predication it is clear that Schelling proceeds by logical-ontological argumentation.

3. Kant's ideal of pure reason affirms that the totality of possible predicates lies inherently, albeit negatively, present (presupposed) in determinate being. This notion of being *as* determinacy (*a logical concept of being*) assumes a certain conception of judgment by means of which any determinate, individual thing is recognizable through its referential relations. Schelling finds that something important is missing in the way Kant understands the role of judgment. The problem is the thinking subject: first, *that* it exists, and second, that it exists within the same whole of totality that it seeks to make sense of. Schelling finds that, in this conception, the individual thinking subject is subordinated to the whole, as a mere moment of the whole. A further problem with this idea is that the position of the thinking subject, in this totality of differential relations, is lost from sight. It is apositional thinking in the sense that determinacy is not recognized as holding a position within this totality.

4. Against this conception of judgment, Schelling states that the judgment (the act of predication) that gives form to being has its place within being. The idea of being is itself produced from a position in the midst of the whole of being. Schelling's new concept of being is understood as that which makes the determination of being possible and actualizes itself within that determination. The position of a proposition is not a necessary position, but a contingent position. This fundamentally changes the conditions of ontology to the extent that no position can ever provide complete determination of the given. Hence, being must be understood as contingent. It is contingent in the sense that it could have been otherwise or been determined otherwise. Contingency is actual because of the individual. This condition is fundamental. It cannot be avoided. There is no absolute ground for objective knowledge because the fact of being can never be suspended or accessed from a pure or neutral position.

5. Being is. The meaning of the words 'being is' is that being stands as a fact that cannot be denied. In the question of being, we are always already in the midst of being, already asking a determinate question. Thought always finds itself in being, as a situation that it has not itself provided. Being is inescapable. It rests on a predicative enterprise in which the

thinking subject moves and can never step out of. Gabriel calls this a “predicative being-in-the-world.”³⁸⁶

6. Schelling’s ambition is to counter the traditional notion of the *unconditioned* as characterized by *necessity* and *eternity* with a *historical* and *contingent* concept of being. This concept of being is characterized by its actualization in the free, predicative act of determination. It is through this determination (origination) in propositional thinking that the contingency of being is made manifest. Unprethinkable being is undetermined, and, as such, only determined through the not-yet of another being, determinate being. The contingency of being is ‘the possibility of another being’ in the sense of another determination. In this sense, Schelling understands unprethinkable being as *the origin* of determinate being (that which originates).

7. In asking ‘Why is there something rather than nothing?’ Schelling approaches the question of an ultimate ground for determinacy. From Hogrebe, we learn that Schelling answers this question with recourse to the origin of judgment.³⁸⁷ In the structure of judgment, the unity of being and thought becomes clear. The unity of being and thought entails that thinking and being are both subject to the conditions of determinacy. Schelling responds to the question of the ground of determinacy with a theory of potencies, which he reconstructs in his theory of predication.

The first potency consists of the ‘originary subject’ and regards the *determinable*. This is not a potency prior to the judgment, but is recognized as such in the structure of judgment. Prior to the judgment, the first potency is unprethinkable being. The second potency consists of the ‘originary predicate’ and is the structural counterpart in the split that establishes the structural basis of logical space. The third potency consists of the copula, or the ‘originary synthesis of subject and predicate,’ which Schelling refers to as *spirit*. From this theory of potencies, he manages to establish the unthinkable moment of thinking within a theory of thinking. The ontological character lies in the logical-ontological premise provided by the determinate concept of being.

8. Schelling adds to this the decisive point that thinking is belayed and that unprethinkable being is that which, no matter how early we come on the scene, is already there. In the very moment when thinking turns to the unprethinkable it vanishes. This is the origin, or the beginning, of thinking. It can never be the object of thinking because thought is always already predicatively mediated sense. Unprethinkable being is not the ground of logical space. It is a ‘non-ground’ (*Ungrund*).

³⁸⁶ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 84. Gabriel makes the point that the facticity of being (our being in sense) reflects an experience of a *thrownness* in the way characterized by Heidegger. Within being we can only move on, never step out.

³⁸⁷ *SW*, XII 53.

Methodologically, it can be said that Schelling starts out from a pre-semantic basis in order to clarify the emergence of the semantic dimension in which being is ‘as’ being (as something determinate *überhaupt*).³⁸⁸ The mere *facticity* of sense, a logical space that is disclosed by virtue of the structure of judgment, is not available to thinking with recourse to judgment (no *ratio determinans*); the impossibility of accounting for the fact of the existence of logical space *is* the contingency of logical space itself. Schelling understands the application of existence to the transcendental ideal (as treated by Kant) to be logically prior to the transcendental ideal and not an effect of it. Schelling reverses the ontological proof of God by stating that concepts are *preceded* by the necessary (unprethinkable) being, and not that the concept of necessary existence *implies* existence. This condition is the *belatedness* of thinking.

9. Regarding the distinction between negative and positive philosophy, it applies that negative philosophy only examines the constitution of logical space and generally assumes the sufficiency of the logical concept of being. Correspondingly, positive philosophy derives from an insight into the severe contingency of logical space and proceeds as a historical philosophy.

10. The ontology of predication provides an explanation of the transition from unprethinkable being to determinate being as an *act of freedom*, which Schelling characterizes as a “potentialization.”³⁸⁹ This potentialization is an activity that takes place without sufficient reason. Freedom is groundless and freedom is human. Therefore, freedom pertains to a being that gives it an ontological status, which is *personhood*, as reflected in the divine person. The engagement of human freedom in the question of being moves Schelling’s attention from a mere transcendental ontology into a notion of personhood.

11. Freedom has its essence through being *human* freedom. The important anthropological turning point (the ontological situation of personhood) is that this in ontology is determined in the question of what a human being is. The personal concept of being reveals the intertwinement of *being* and the *human being*. The merit of Zantwijk’s and Gabriel’s readings of Schelling’s ontology of freedom is an insight into this link

³⁸⁸ Zantwijk provides a helpful description of this. “Die interessanteste Grundüberzeugung Schellings ist ohne Zweifel seine These, daß ein Urteil nur auf der Grundlage eines vorprädikativen Wirklichkeitsverstehens möglich ist. Sie wendet sich gegen das Vorurteil, die Vorprädikative Grundlage des Urteils sei ein chaotisches Gemenge von Einbildungen. Schellings transzendente Hermeneutik erkennt zwar an, daß logisch konsistente und genau analysierbare Beziehungen nur zwischen Urteilen möglich sein können. Sie bestreitet nur, daß daraus folgt, daß die vorprädikative Einbildung völlig chaotisch ist. [...] Man kann über Emotionen urteilen, aber auch Urteile vorausahnen.” Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalismus*, 275–276.

³⁸⁹ *SW*, XIII, 264f, 267, 279.

between the semantic dimension and personal identity as “*the very open region in which fields of sense appear as such.*”³⁹⁰

12. Personhood is that which sets the human conditions for meaning. From Schelling’s notion of the contingent concept of being it follows that no ultimate, objective reference point is given beyond the person. Personhood is the only available basis for predicative agency. It is as a free predicative agent, lacking sufficient ground, that the person comes to see the world in particular ways depending on its particular position in the world.

13. From the notion of unprethinkable being (that which we cannot not think yet can never grasp as such), Schelling derives the structure of the presupposition of all determination. This is the necessity of the world for thinking. Any determination takes form as part of a world without which no determination is possible. The presupposition is the meaningful structures of logical space underlying any particular determination. Nevertheless, every structure of meaning finds its limits due to the condition of the finitude of reason that produced it. In Schelling’s ontology of freedom this is the fallibility inherent to freedom. The fact that our predication makes the object, as object, available, also makes our relationship to objects fallible. Conceptually established relations are, as such, without guarantees.

14. The belatedness of thinking is the reason that the transition from unprethinkable being to determinate being can never be illuminated. The transition, as ‘potentialization’, is an act of determination in which the differentiation and the idea of distinction is made possible, and this *only* by the will. Hence, the transition is willed (*Will is primal Being*). The will, as the ground of the semantic dimension of all being, cannot be conceptually anticipated, only stated belatedly.

15. The person has its own finitude as the basis of being. The unprethinkable is absolute in the sense of being unrelated or without relations. The person is a finite being in the sense of being a related being that is positioned in being, and in this sense determined by the relationless absolute, an unrelated relation. The person therefore consists of a middle-ground, between the unavailability of an absolute ground and its own self-mediation on the basis of determinate being. This is the incomprehensibility of personhood. The person always encounters, in its self-relation, something that it has not posited itself. This is what conditions the person and the condition of personhood itself.

In a certain way, a modern way, Schelling’s notion of personhood invites us to give up our conception of the world as an entity out there, about

³⁹⁰ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 71.

which we are to uncover true properties. The world is decisively understood as a limit-concept, and it holds the function of a limit concept that enables meaningful speech about objects. The cosmological function of the world, as a limit-concept, derives from the person who, as a personal being, arranges and *orders the world* as a free, responsible, and personal being. There is no absolute criterion of ordering. There is personhood.

If the world pertains to the conditions of the order that we assign to 'all there is,' then this order provides organizational domains or classes for what a possible object, phenomena, species, category, etc. is. The order of multiple domains is available for a meaningful discourse in reason. Personhood is a conscious basis in which multiple domains of orders are anchored and deployed for the benefit of a functional semantic dimension. Personhood is all about providing and maintaining a stable semantic dimension. Hoglebe has taken Schelling's logical-ontological reflections on judgment and predication far but, as I shall show in the next chapter, Gabriel has offered a presentation of Schelling's thinking in a domain-ontological setting that provides a more formal form to Schelling's arguments. The dimensions of personhood, as they have been portrayed in this chapter, might not be able to follow through on formal arguments. However, the merit of Schelling's depiction of personhood is to have placed these arguments in a human setting that pertains to the human lifeworld. As Zantwijk says, "the self-construal of the human being is always placed in the context of the construal of the world and of being."³⁹¹ The reason for this lies in the fact that the human being is itself a part of the world. Schelling's notion of personhood, in its central feature, serves to make this clear.

³⁹¹ Zantwijk, *Pan-Personalism*, 275.

PART III

The World-Inhabitor

8 Orientation and Religion

8.1 Schelling's Domain-Ontology

The aim of this final part is to show how the reading of Schelling's notion of personhood can be made available to contemporary philosophy of religion, and in this regard, be grafted onto the discussion of human religiosity. It is through the composition of embeddedness in Schelling's notion of personhood that his thought can be disclosed and made available to a contemporary discussion concerning the relation between religion and selfhood. The aim is to unfold the potential of Schelling in discussion with Dalferth's philosophy of orientation.

The onto-theological aspect of Schelling's thinking admittedly provides an interpretation of religion that has only gained marginal attention in this study. Among the interpreters of Schelling's later thought, it is clear that Schelling's philosophy of religion has garnered some disagreement in regard to Schelling's theological ambitions (e.g. Fuhrman and Schulz). In order to limit my exposition of Schelling, I have therefore intentionally avoided Schelling's theological interpretators as well as his treatment of particular mythologies or religions.

Schelling's onto-theology, insofar as it reflects a methodological procedure, enables Schelling to construe the ontological situation that surrounds the notion of personhood. Schelling does not promote a religious philosophy, but an interpretation of religion that contains a vision of philosophical religion. It should, on the one hand, be understood that Schelling's treatment of religion exceeds the scope of this study. However, the attention that Schelling gives to religion could, on the other hand, have been the basis for another and a more comprehensive study of the ontology of freedom. In this study, however, Schelling's onto-theological discourse is situated as belonging to the metaphysical setting in which he develops the notion of personhood.

The potential of Schelling's notion of religion for this study therefore consists of the form of his reflections on the human world-relation that becomes essential to the ontology of freedom as it develops from his middle-period. This world-relation – I have characterized it as an ontological situation – is to be made available for further discussion. First, I show how Schelling's notion of personhood can be presented in the form of

a domain-ontology, as has been proposed by Gabriel in his formalization of Högrefe's approach to Schelling's ontology of predication. This will show a model that is descriptive of the finitude of reason, insofar as it can be addressed as a matter of meaning in human life, and a way to explicate the structures and limits that prove incompatible and insufficient in (what existential thinking understands as) the *limit-phenomena* of human living. Second, I consult Dalferth's notion of religion as it pertains to the challenge of human life-orientation, in order to clarify how a composition of first-person cosmology can be explicated through a translation of ontology into a life-worldly understanding of religion. I contend that the latter enables a further understanding of Schellingian personhood as world-inhabitation. In a preliminary sense, world-inhabitation can be described as the endeavour to live through proper orientation. Dalferth, in this regard, offers a way in which to understand religious orientation in the form of an *absolute* aspect, called absolute orientation. I seek in the final part to unfold this idea in relation to the heteronomous being of personhood in its interpersonal aspect and, in a brief final section, to propose a way of understanding the relation of transcendence and orientation with Schelling's domain-ontology.

If a common conception of the world in contemporary thinking can be said to derive from a view of *the world as a determinate thing*, then Schelling's ontology of freedom provides a critical, and/or provocative, but also highly relevant, sort of thinking concerning the question of the world. It is along the same lines as Taylor's critique of the dis-engaged, modern rationality. Taylor seeks to counter and correct the object-oriented view of the world by means of his theory of background framework. Schelling can most certainly be understood as belonging to the same trajectory of Kantian argumentation that counters this common view of the world.³⁹² The notion of background framework pertains to the notion of personhood insofar as it shows the engagement and embeddedness of the human being in meaning, and that the parameters of meaning are determined by this embeddedness.

In line with Kant, Schelling argues that the condition that enables the determination and definition of things remains fundamentally undefinable. As in the *Erlangen Lectures*, Schelling argues that all systems (or theories) that lay universal claim generate a nontransparent structure that makes them 'blind' to their constitutive grounds (see section 5.5).³⁹³ According to Schelling, the question concerning totality, the question concerning 'all

³⁹² See Taylor, "Overcoming Epistemology"; Taylor, "Lichtung or Lebensform: Parallels Between Heidegger and Wittgenstein"; Taylor, "Engaged Agency and Background in Heidegger."

³⁹³ In discussion with Hegel and modern set theory, this text becomes decisive for Gabriel's development of the Schellingian domain-ontology. See Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 104–136.

there is', is not primarily a question of knowledge. 'All there is' is not something that can be determined with correct knowledge. The idea of totality remains the condition for knowledge, and it can therefore never become the object of knowledge. The idea of totality leaves us with a notion of finitude regarding our epistemic capacities. The absolute, as unavailable and indeterminable, remains necessary. It is a necessary infinite in which we become aware of our finitude. It is the fundamental contrasting feature that illuminates our finitude.³⁹⁴

One of the central features of Schelling's ontology of freedom is the introduction of unprethinkable being that shows how the propositional form of reason is always mediated and grounded on a presupposition of the world. It follows that the ground of knowledge is without any ultimate guarantee. Knowledge is a mediated response to absolute otherness, to non-knowledge. This is an argument for the brute condition that knowledge is exactly what will always fail in its attempt to set us right in the world definitely, because knowledge is grounded on will, on a fundamental yearning. Högrefe calls it *will to knowledge* or *will to truth*. I would call it *will to world*. It is the basis of the presupposition of the world, but it does not in itself guarantee knowledge. Our engagement with knowledge we have concerning the world (that we ask for the world on our own terms) makes any such thing as original or pure knowledge impossible. The point is that the human aspiration to relate properly to the world through knowledge has its own impossibility built into it. This point can be clarified with the problem of finitude that derives from Schelling's motif of 'beginning'.³⁹⁵ Hence, finitude provides us with insight into our relation to the world, of which we cannot have absolute knowledge. This insight is *conscious finitude*.

Personhood is a consciousness about one's being in relation to oneself as an agent. This consciousness entails one's fundamental need to inhabit the world as an agent, and to disclose the world to one's personal being. It is as much the basis for understanding as it is intertwined with that which one seeks to understand. The person is a world-being, a *world-inhabitor*, which means that *the world is the world by means of the being that lives in it*.

There is a central sensitivity to the limits of rational procedures in Schelling's thought. In conscious finitude, we encounter the human condition of operating and orientating one's living without any clear-cut

³⁹⁴ As Gabriel puts it: "Das Absolute ist daher keine mythische Entität (was kein ernsthafter Denker jemals gemeint hat), sondern lediglich der Name für eine Stelle, die immer schon markiert sein muß, wenn wir uns dort befinden sollen, wo wir uns de facto vorfinden: In einer Welt mit bestimmten Zuständen." Gabriel, *Das Absolute und die Welt in Schellings Freiheitsschrift*, 37 n69.

³⁹⁵ Again, this is Högrefe's point concerning the 'Erkenntnissuche' that precedes all 'Erkenntnissicherung'. Högrefe, *Prädikation und Genesis*, 47.

answers or absolute points of orientation. These limitations of reason are not something we are supposed to abandon, but something we have to give in to and come to terms with. From the outset, Schelling unearths these limitations in discussions with Kant's critical philosophy.

Reason is not primary, nor is it fundamental. Reason does not answer to a world that it can *ever* come to grasp in its entirety. Reason is presented with a world that is already given. From this state of factual being, reflection uncovers the underlying unprethinkable otherness, an all-pervasive non-reason. All reason (*Sinn*) rises from a preceeding 'madness' (*Wahn-sinn*) to an order that it maintains in the idea of a world. The '*Verstand*' (under-standing) is that which brings the ground of madness to a 'standing,' in an act of '*ver-stehen*.' This is the fundamental movement of meaning-making that is the potentialization of being. To make sense of non-sense is to rise to order. It is a move from the unprethinkable to a standing in a semantically ordered world.³⁹⁶ This movement is also expressed as an escape from the grip of the unprethinkable: "We must move away [*hinwegkommen*] and get away [*loskommen*] from the unprethinkable in order to get to the *Idea*."³⁹⁷ The movement into a logical space in which determinate things make sense, as part of a world, is a movement of *will*. Human life always inhabits a world according to the meaningful structures that it can establish. The threat of meaning, the threat that is always present in phenomena that reveal the insufficiency or incompatibility of the world posited (the meaningful structures that we apply), is therefore unavoidable. Gabriel explains:

Understanding always reaches into the dimension of non-knowledge in the attempt to determine something. Because determination is not only incomplete but furthermore presupposes an indeterminable dimension of distinction, the sense-dimension [*Sinndimension*] of understanding always constitutes itself so that it cannot rule out its own breakdown.³⁹⁸

When Schelling speaks of freedom as *will* or as *yearning* he is alluding to fundamental drives and impulses. He refers to the will as a "source of self-movement [*Selbstbewegungsquelle*]." However, the notion of the will entails a rather ambiguous account of the active aspect of this movement. Schelling describes the transition from unprethinkable being to determinate being as a movement away from the unprethinkable. However, at the same time, he also describes this movement as a withdrawal on the part of

³⁹⁶ Thus the words, "Aus diesem Verstandlosen ist im eigentlichen Sinne der Verstand geboren. [...] Alle Geburt ist Geburt aus Dunkel ans Licht." *SW*, VII 360.

³⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, XIV 337.

³⁹⁸ Markus Gabriel, "Zum philosophischen Ansatz Wolfram Hogrebes," in *Die Wirklichkeit des Denkens*, ed. Jens Halfwassen and Markus Gabriel (Heidelberg: Winter, 2007), 98.

unprethinankable being. This transition cannot be illuminated, only understood retrospectively:

[Only after] I have decided between +a and –a [can it be said that] my ‘being +a’ is not resultant of a mere, blind whim, which would always and necessarily require thinking its contingency. Now it is not seen as a contingency because it is an intention, something willed.³⁹⁹

The way something becomes a content for consciousness and for reason *is not itself rational* (in the sense that it does not have sufficient ground). Instead, it is ‘willed.’

Insofar as this can be understood as an act of consciousness, Schelling calls it *production*. Consciousness ‘produces’ its object by means of judgment: by determining something as something this something becomes an object of thought, and, as such, it becomes an existent (in a particular domain of rational discourse). However, it remains fundamental that the will wants something. This something is neither itself nor something of itself. The content of thought is given from outside of thought: “In producing, the human being is not occupied with itself but with something outside itself.”⁴⁰⁰ Consciousness is therefore already beyond or outside itself when thinking. Thinking is a movement from outside into thinking. As such, it entails a movement of transcendence, not *to* a beyond, but from a beyond, from beyond semantic immanence. Schelling portrays this movement as the *creation of the world* (the Christian creation myth is the subtext in use) by taking this movement as the world-constituting movement. At the same time, this movement of determination is portrayed as the withdrawal of unprethinkable being:

[as a] process of suspension, and through that, [as a] posited or mediated *re-establishment* [of] necessary being. However, between this sublation and this re-establishment lies the entire world. The unprethinkable being is only withdrawn in order to give place to creation (therefore, because something is withdrawn, in order for creation to emerge, is the space the a priori form of all finite being).⁴⁰¹

The movement of consciousness posits the world as the presupposition in which the object becomes determined as object. The object requires (for its determination) the world of which it is an object, which is why the world is

³⁹⁹ *SW*, XIV 338.

⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, XIV 352.

⁴⁰¹ “[D]er Proceß einer Suspension und dadurch gesetzten oder vermittelten *Wiederherstellung* seines nothwendigen Seyns. Aber zwischen jener Aufhebung und dieser *Wiederherstellung* liegt die ganze Welt. Das unvordenkliche Seyn wird nur hinweggenommen, um der Schöpfung Raum zu geben (darum, weil etwas hinweggenommen ist, damit die Schöpfung entsteht, ist der Raum die apriorische Form alles endlichen Seyns).” *Ibid.*, XIV 352–353.

a necessary presupposition. It is a *pre-supposition* insofar as it precedes any determination or existence that becomes possible through it. It is a *pre-supposition* because it underlies any determination as a semantic dimension. It is both an underlying movement and a movement from below. It is a *pre-sup-position* insofar as it is positioned in (and by) logical space.

What does this mean? Any conception of the world remains, logically, a step behind. It is only retrospectively that one can examine the procedure. The world comes about in the form of a withdrawing that conditions thinking when something determinate is thought. We can understand world-shaping as an unconscious act of consciousness. This act provides the fundamental distinction between form and content, in which it posits the content as something that is already there to be discovered through representation.⁴⁰² As soon as something determinate is thought, the domain in which this determinate thing is established as a proper content is already presupposed. Schelling concludes his understanding concerning anthropomorphism in light of this point. Any determination has already established the background against which it is represented. "Either everywhere no anthropomorphism [...] or an unlimited anthropomorphism, a thorough and [...] *complete* humanization of God."⁴⁰³ It is of little to no concern for Schelling because we cannot determine the one without the other. We cannot know what a human being is without the preceding establishment of that through which it is determined.

The form-content dialectics in Schelling's transcendental ontology of freedom become the point of departure for Gabriel's exposition of a Schellingian domain-ontology (that by means of which Schelling puts the human self at the center of his theory of the world). This theory has both merits and limits. On the one hand, it makes Schelling's thought far more formal and concrete, and this in a way that makes it easier to apply to contemporary thinking. On the other hand, it tends to lose sight of two important aspects: the one being that Schelling did not settle on logical categories alone, but developed a severe sensitivity to the emotional and psychological aspects of human self-understanding; the other being this very self-understanding, which is formatively already in play at the outset of any act of consciousness. As long as we bear in mind that no formalization is exhaustive, we can still learn a lot from his ontology of the domains of sense.

The domain-ontology should be understood as a logical-ontological setting that accounts for the radical sense-dependency of being in the form of logical domains (what I have primarily referred to as logical space or the semantic dimension). Without a fundamental understanding of the

⁴⁰² Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 130.

⁴⁰³ *SW*, VIII 167.

conditions implied in the ways in which the semantic dimension works as operations in logical domains, we never get beyond the self-grounding totality-thinking provided by negative philosophy.

The most fundamental characteristic that has been drawn from Schelling's ontology of freedom is that only the semantic domain affirms existence of particular things. In other words, *existence is a property of domains*. What can exist can only exist as part of a domain or as belonging to a domain. However, the existence of a particular thing (belonging to a particular domain) requires the existence of other domains in which this particular object does not belong. Hence, there must necessarily be multiple domains in order to provide proper determination. Gabriel explains:

Whenever we decide to quantify over a particular domain of objects and what exists in its scope, we necessarily posit that in this domain something happens that is different from what happens in other domains. The existential quantifier picks out something that is determined in contrast with others, both on the level of the elements it discriminates within a particular object and on the level of the domain, within which the object is distinguished as an element, because there are no domain-transcendent elements to be registered in any discourse. Therefore, to claim that something exists is to claim that there is a plurality of domains, given that domains exist and, hence, only exist in contradistinction to other domains. Were there only one domain, there would be none; the form and content of any given domain consists among other things in its difference from all others.⁴⁰⁴

Scientific discourses and discourses in general generate domains of objects whose regularities they methodically investigate in order both to determine what can (possibility) appear in a given domain and to investigate what actually appears within it and if the relations between what appears within them are necessary or contingent; in this way, the modalities are circumscribed by and within discourses and the domains of objects they generate and cultivate. So whatever ontological structures are presupposed by the formation of domains, they have to affect our way of thinking about objects, for there are no objects outside of a domain, because the set of all objects outside of a domain would simply be another domain defined by rules of inclusion and exclusion.⁴⁰⁵

A domain is an intelligible structure that is characterized by rules for the determination of the properties and possibilities of its content as proper objects. The qualification of an object as belonging to a domain makes the domain dependent upon other domains. A domain is therefore always established in contrast with another domain, which is a relation that

⁴⁰⁴ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 122. Gabriel's presentation of a Schellingian domain-ontology is elaborated upon in discussion with Hegel's *Logic* and modern set theory as presented by Georg Cantor, which shall not be brought in to the current discussion. See Georg Cantor, *Contributions to the Founding of the Theory of Transfinite Numbers*. (New York: Dover Publications, 1952).

⁴⁰⁵ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 123.

logically cannot be illuminated from within a domain, only from a broader, more fundamental domain. The possible regress is infinite.

Schelling's theory of predication, which underlies this theory of domains, provides an insight into the fact that there is no access granted from within a domain to the constitution of the domain. The rules of a domain cannot illuminate its structure; only another domain can do that. The structure of domains can only be accessed from another, higher-order domain. This establishes an important logical principle: the question of constitution is the inherent point of transgression through which any domain can be said to exceed itself. The question of origin and constitution is what necessarily leads beyond its own structures. This is what it means to say that the rules of a particular domain cannot account for the domain and its relation to other domains, that only another domain can do that.⁴⁰⁶ In Schelling's thought, this is the blind spot of existence that he explicates with the motif of the *beginning*. A domain, qua domain, always generates its own blind spot. For Schelling, this articulates a far more general aspect, namely, a severe problem within thinking as such, insofar as *thinking is domain-ordered thinking*.

In Schelling's reflections on metaphysical thinking as an attempt to grasp the totality of the world, this is expressed in the condition that any metaphysical system, or any theory that lay universal claim, in principle generates its own blind spot, which is the impossibility of illuminating its own structure by itself. The problem with any metaphysics can be stated as a logical problem: the attempt to think totality necessarily generates a nontransparent structure. Theories that make universal claims somehow seek to go beyond object-domains, they claim to be the ultimate domain, the *domain of all domains*. Such theories thereby lose sight of the fact that they are themselves domains and that they work in accordance with the same conditions as any other object-domain. The domain-ontology provides that the illumination of an object-domain can only be achieved from outside the domain, that is, from another domain. From higher order domains one can achieve a "perspective of comparison that surveys many different object domains, each of which is determined solely over against the others."⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁶ Gabriel explains this transgression as the contingency of any domain. "Given that domains are only individuated in a context of domains, transgression is always possible, because the other domains are present as excluded. Therefore, the possible transgression of a domain is built into its constitution, even though it cannot be determined by its constitutive rules. Therefore, a possibility, which is not a possibility determined by its constitutive rules, is implicit in every domain. This possibility is its contingency." *Ibid.*, 125.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

On what basis are object-domains connected? What can, in the widest sense, be said to be the ‘domain of all domains’, without compromising the domain-ontology itself (that is, a non-domain superiority)?

Instead of a direct domain, it might prove helpful to understand this as a *capacity* of operating and combining domains. The capacity of combining domains, as a capacity underlying all domains, cannot in a sufficient way be understood as a domain itself. Högrefe calls this the “dimension of distinctions [*Distinktionsdimension*]” or the “domain of distinction”. The most fundamental domain (or non-domain) is that which contains all possible differences.⁴⁰⁸ Gabriel calls this ‘*logical space*’, which designates the logical dimension in which all object domains are interrelated and can be distinguished. Logical space cannot be accounted for as a domain among other domains. It must be acknowledged, in its ‘non-existence’, as the necessary condition of possibility for the existence of domains. Logical space does not exist. It cannot be considered as belonging to a particular domain, or else there would be a need for the generation of a higher-order domain, which would itself be dependent on logical space. Hence, logical space is the necessary presupposition of existence (in domains) as such.

8.2 Cosmological Models

When we think about the world we do so by means of cosmological models that aim to make the world intelligible and bring the world to order. The world can be approached in many different ways. However, regardless of which way or which model is set up to approach the world, we can only do so in adherence with the conditions of logical space. If the world is ‘all there is,’ then we can only rightfully approach the world by articulating the logical space that underlies it. The possibility of its determination (logical space) precedes its determination. This possibility is the intelligibility of anything determinate. Hence, in seeking answers about ‘all there is,’ we have already reached out for more than can be determined. As soon as an articulation of logical space is sought, it withdraws from us and falls into the background.⁴⁰⁹ As Gabriel says, we can only refer to the background

⁴⁰⁸ “Any claim about fundamental distinctions takes this dimension from the outset as given and complete. It cannot be distinguished from other spaces and simply cannot be positively identified: nevertheless, we need it because otherwise we could not create a universe through our distinctions. It is the semantically completely diaphanous background or protoplasm of all semantic contrasts, the transcendental condition of their possibility.” Wolfram Högrefe, *Echo des Nichtwissens* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), 317f. Quoted from Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 123 n87.

⁴⁰⁹ “Logical space as such can only be glimpsed in its withdrawal, that is, only when we determine something. We must not forget, too, that upon referring to logical space as the background of our determinations, qua that which retracts upon our determining something or other, we determine it as such (logical space qua background) only by ipso

under excessive and improper terms, which will always fail to provide an exhaustive articulation (even the one I attempt to give now). Schelling writes:

In eternity there is no “as”; something, call it A, cannot be anything without the exclusion of that which it is not, not A. Here, however, the subject is merely pure, that is, straightaway and utterly irreflective Being, not being posited as such. For any “being posited as such,” anything “as,” as such is posited in and presupposes a reflection – is a “being reflected” – is, in other words, already a Contrarium.⁴¹⁰

Schelling fully acknowledges the fatal consequences of these limitations of thinking. Thinking always comes too late. It is the fate of finitude, albeit an incomprehensible fact, that thinking can even be aware of its own finitude, even retrospectively. Thinking can relate to (and reconcile with) its own finitude in the form of a belated retrojection. As soon as something is thought this something is already posited in a domain of logical space. Hence, the world is not *exclusively* the physical whole found in scientific images of the world, nor is it a phenomenologically formulated life-world (or any other version of the world for that matter). These are retrojections. A theory, or myth, of origin is such a retrojection. It is a way of providing an understanding of the present domain, the present world. In this sense, the question of the world is *an expression of the need for ‘another domain,’* a broader, underlying domain from which one can illuminate the present domain, which in its cosmological aspect is the scope of human life.

Such a theory or myth can only be established from within a version of the world for which a beginning is requested: “All efforts to determine the origin of reflection and all candidates for such determinate origins are myths of origin designed by the residents of a world.”⁴¹¹ In order to reach out for ultimate questions concerning the world (the need for another domain), one necessarily already inhabits the world, an inhabitation by virtue of which such questions arise. Regarding an understanding of religion, this enables an understanding of the distinction and relation between transcendence and immanence. Transcendence (a transcendent world, power, or God) need not be understood as the claim of another world, or a realm beyond the world. Transcendence can also be understood as ‘a need for another domain’, and thereby as tied to the immanence (world) as a matter and a need for illumination of an immanent, present situation. There is a fundamental being-in-the-world from which all questions concerning the world derive. Such questions reflect this being-in-the-world.

facto bringing it into the foreground and generating yet another background.” Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 126–127.

⁴¹⁰ *SW*, XIV 106.

⁴¹¹ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 128.

Gabriel understands these domain-ontological implications of Schelling's thought as the ontological shift of modernity.⁴¹² I find Gabriel's elaborations on Högberg's take on Schelling, in the form of a domain-ontology, provide an eminent way for formalizing the meaning of finitude insofar as it pertains to our rational capacities and our need for meaning. Schelling's speculative theology is, of course, far richer in terms of potential interpretations, and there is no way in which any formalization can replace the depth of Schelling's thought. However, the domain-ontology might enable a bridging platform that can be useful for the question of orientation.

The question that needs to be addressed (as is the case with any ontology) is: *what does this mean to the human being?* How does one live in this? What are the ramifications of a person developing a self-understanding in accordance with these conditions? Regarding the question of the world, orientation pertains to cosmology as a procedure of ordering the world. In this sense, orientation reflects human world-inhabitation. While Schelling articulates a condition of non-knowledge, orientation reflects a state of dis-orientation (implied by the circumstance of the contingency of the world). The goal of orientation is to disclose the world for a meaningful life. Fundamentally, the notion of orientation contributes to an explication of personhood, to the ontological situation of personhood, as an illumination of why first-person cosmology cannot be achieved with universal claim of 'all there is.' In religious orientation the fundamental relation of the human being to the world is established, not as a matter of knowledge about the world, but as a matter of establishing a meaningful life in the world. Religion is a way in which this can be done; that is, *religion is not itself meaning, religion is method to a meaningful life.*

8.3 Religious Orientation

Dalferth's philosophy of religion is a theory of *orientation*. Orientation is understood as a fundamental aspect of human living and thinking, including the form of religion.⁴¹³ Dalferth calls this life-orientation.⁴¹⁴ Life

⁴¹² The ontological shift of modernity in which "being becomes its own belated retrojection: Being, the domain where everything, and therefore a plurality of fields of sense, takes place, only takes place as the imaginary whole generated from within a particular field of sense." Ibid., xxix.

⁴¹³ Dalferth, to a great extent, derives his concept of orientation from the work of Werner Stegmaier. See Werner Stegmaier, "Weltorientierung," ed. Joachim Ritter, Karlfried Gründer, and Gottfried Gabriel, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Basel: Schwabe, 2007/1976). See also Werner Stegmaier, *Philosophie der Orientierung* (Berlin; New York: De Gruyter, 2008). Stegmaier's guiding definition of orientation concerns the disclosure of situations for the possibilities of action. "Orientierung als die Leistung [...] verstehen, sich in wechselnden Situationen zurechtzufinden und in ihnen Handlungsmöglichkeiten zu erschließen." Werner

is a concept that pertains to the totality of aspects of human living, human self-understanding included. Dalferth centers his understanding of human life on a world-experience that is marked by contingency, uncontrollability, and a deficit meaning. Moreover, this is an experience of the insufficiency of our rational capacities and our existential expectations from life, a need for meaningful living. Due to a lack of meaning, human existence becomes a problem. These tensions, inherent to human life, motivate and necessitate a fundamental need for orientation. Religion is a way of dealing with these conditions from the side of our rational (albeit limited) capacities.

Religions are not counter-rational [*vernunftwidriger*] superstition, but rather the rational attempt exactly in view of the complete meaningless [*Sinnlosen*] and the inevitability of the unavailable to live a decent life.⁴¹⁵

Dalferth's central point is that religion (as a form of life-orientation) provides a way in which to relate to the inconceivable; that is, religion conserves the inconceivable without making it conceivable.⁴¹⁶ Religious articulations of these conditions by various systems of symbols provide cognitive and emotional structures for living with the uncontrollable in the controllable. "The point of religions is not to make the uncontrollable controllable but to enable us to live with the uncontrollable in a controllable way."⁴¹⁷ This notion of religion as life-orientation is developed on the basis of human life in the world and the conditions of this relation.

Stegmaier, "Einleitung," in *Orientierung: philosophische Perspektiven*, ed. Werner Stegmaier (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 16. Many central thoughts of Dalferth's employment of the orientation-model are further derived from Kant's 1786 essay "Was heißt: Sich im Denken orientieren?"

⁴¹⁴ Dalferth operates with a basic distinction between living and thinking, which constitutes two dialectic domains of orientation. Philosophical reflection is understood as an attempt to obtain orientation in thinking, and religion is correspondingly understood as a way of orienting oneself in life. "Im Denken orientieren wir uns, indem wir reflektierend zu verstehen suchen, wie wir uns und unsere Welt verstehen und verstehend deuten. Im Leben orientieren wir uns, indem wir uns und die Welt, in der wir leben, in bestimmter Weise verstehen und deuten, so dass wir gemeinsam in ihr leben und handeln können." Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 6.

⁴¹⁵ Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 252.

⁴¹⁶ "Auf verschiedene Weise versuchen Religionen, die Bereiche des Unbestimmbaren, Unzugänglichen, Chaotischen, Sinnlosen, Unverfügbaren, Unfaßbaren und nicht Kontrollierbaren an die Bereiche vernünftig bestimmter Ordnungen und sinnvoll verstehbarer Strukturen zurückzubinden, sie also als das Andere und als die für sich und als solche nicht faßbare Rückseite des Sinnvollen, Verfügbaren und Kontrollierbaren zu thematisieren." Ibid., 251.

⁴¹⁷ "Die Pointe von Religionen ist nicht, das Unkontrollierbare kontrollierbar zu machen, sondern es uns zu ermöglichen, auf kontrollierbare Weise mit dem Unkontrollierbaren zu leben." Ibid., 252.

Dalferth's *The Reality of the Possible* (2003) concerns the world and the way in which the world is formative for human existence. Fundamentally, Dalferth promotes a phenomenological approach that turns to the human life-world for an understanding of Kant's conception of the world as the horizon of possibilities. At this level, with Kant's ideal of reason as the common denominator, a conversation between Schellingian personhood and religious orientation (as it is presented by Dalferth) can be established. Particularly, this presentation aims to show how Dalferth's interpretation of religion as orientation can provide a recasting of the ontological situation of Schellingian personhood. This recasting enables a phenomenological explication of Schelling's ontology that illustrates how it pertains to the composition of a first-person cosmology in a religious setting.

8.4 The World of Orientation

The world is the world of orientation. The basic idea of orientation consists in finding one's way in situations of one's life in the world, and in disclosing these situations for possible action. The world is a matter of concrete situations for the human agent. The meaning of the world is made manifest in meaningful situations. Orientation works in virtue of the order of the world and the ability to locate oneself within that order.

Human beings do not only exist in the world, they live in it. They cannot do that without orienting themselves in the world, that is, to *order* [*ordnen*] the world in a way that is meaningful to them as well as *locating* themselves in the world both individually and together. A world is ordered for us when we have a set of rules to our disposal that enable us to navigate [*zurechtzufinden*] in ever new situations; and we can locate ourselves in the world when we *employ* these rules in living and action, that is, to use them for the benefit of orientation in new situations.⁴¹⁸

Dalferth's thinking is informed by both phenomenological and hermeneutical tenets, by a notion of the world that is articulated on the basis of human life and the way the world pertains to meaning (or lack of meaning) in the context of human life. The way in which this conception squares with the model derived from Schelling's ontology is not spectacular. The domain of human life amounts to 'logical space' as the personal basis for consciousness and cognition.

⁴¹⁸ "Menschen existieren nicht nur in der Welt, sondern leben in ihr. Das können sie nicht, ohne sich in ihr zu orientieren, sie also in einer für sie sinnvollen Weise zu *ordnen* sowie sich individuell und gemeinsam in ihr zu *orten*. So ist eine Welt für uns geordnet, wenn wir über ein *Regelrepertoire* verfügen, das es uns ermöglicht, uns in immer neuen Situationen zurechtzufinden; und wir können uns in ihr orten, wenn wir diese Regeln im Leben und Handeln *gebrauchen*, sie also zur Orientierung in neuen Situationen anwenden können." Ibid., 245; see also Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 34–41.

The interpretational capacities in focus within Dalferth's approach echo Högrebe's characterization of the human being as a '*Deutungswesen*.' According to Dalferth's view, the world is part of a cosmological project, as an orientational field, a horizon, by virtue of which we can determine our actions and reasons. Orientation is an achievement of our interpretational capacities, which determine situations according to possibilities for action. This means that a particular situation of orientation is determined through our possibilities for changing it by means of our actions. The 'reality of the possible', as Dalferth puts it, is therefore a fundamental part of the interpretational basis with which humans understand their world, a world they share.

Dalferth presents his phenomenological notion of the world by emphasizing *reality* (what is real) rather than *existence*. In so doing, Dalferth explains that *reality is always more than what is the case*. This means that the real always exceeds itself by being a reality that provides certain possibilities. "The world in which we live is more than what is the case, it is also what could be the case."⁴¹⁹ Dalferth thereby characterizes the world *in which we live* as the totality of both what is *actual*, and what is *possible*, in the sense that the world forms an interpretational basis that is fertile with various possibilities that underlie any understanding we might have. Possibility thereby provides the horizon (or background) upon which we have meaningful experiences.

In its feature of life-orientation, Dalferth understands orientation as an orientation in the world that is rendered real against the background of its possibilities. The background of reality, or the background against which the real is real (the possible), is the central basis of Dalferth's treatment of orientation as a model for religion.

Dalferth explores ontological and metaphysical concepts both with regards to classical proofs for God's existence and with regards to traditional understandings of the absolute. His goal is not to develop an ontology, but to explicate and translate the meaning of ontological statements within his phenomenological-hermeneutic discussion of *the*

⁴¹⁹ "Die Welt, in der wir leben, ist mehr als das, was der Fall ist. Sie ist immer auch das, was der Fall sein könnte, und nur indem wir das, was der Fall ist, in diesem Horizont verstehen, können wir handeln." Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 35; Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 245. This dictum reveals the Wittgensteinian tenet in Dalferth's thinking. The opening propositions of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* read "1. Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist. 1.1 Die Welt ist die Gesamtheit der Tatsachen, nicht der Dinge." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus. Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 9.

real.⁴²⁰ Dalferth writes: “This is not about the part-whole relation but about the phenomenon and the horizon, and that is something fundamentally different.”⁴²¹ The possibilities of the world are not unreal or free-floating possibilities, but possibilities *of the real* and possibilities *of a manifest reality*.⁴²² As Dalferth underlines, in every proposition a world-horizon is expressed, and this contains the possibilities *of the real*.⁴²³

A central feature of the phenomenological concept of the world is the transformation of the notion of the world from a noun to an adjective, from ‘world’ to ‘worldly’. The adjective aspect of the phenomena lies in the way experienced reality appears *worldly*. Phenomena become meaningful against the background of a worldly ambience, a character that provides a meaningful coherence. The given presents itself in a *worldly way*, that is, as pertaining to the horizon of possibilities on which they are understood.

Dalferth derives the adjective notion of the world from Kant’s notion of the world as a transcendental, regulative idea that enables us to understand the given under the unity of appearance. The *world of reality*, as Dalferth asserts, becomes the *world for us*, and “only the world that we can perceive and grasp by means of our understanding, is *for us*.”⁴²⁴ However, Dalferth further proposes *a semiotic extension of the adjective concept of world*. While Kant’s ‘worldliness’ was applied to the perspective of perception, Dalferth extends this to the broader spectrum of what can be *designated*.⁴²⁵ The worldliness of the world applies to everything that can be perceived or

⁴²⁰ In what follows, I focus my discussion on the chapter entitled *E. Möglichkeitsdenken und Gottesgedanke*. Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 116–168.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁴²² “In phänomenologischer Lesart ist die Welt wirklich, weil und insofern sie der Möglichkeitshorizont von Wirklichem ist. Dieser Möglichkeitshorizont ist nicht dadurch wirklich, dass er eine eigene Wirklichkeit wäre, sondern dass er der Horizont von Wirklichem ist. Horizonte sind keine Eigenschaften des Wirklichen, deren Horizonte sie sind, sowenig der Horizont hinter dem Zürichsee eine Eigenschaft der dort sichtbaren Berge ist. Die Möglichkeiten eines Wirklichen sind daher selbst nicht wirklich, sondern eben möglich, aber nur deshalb, weil sie Möglichkeiten eines Wirklichen sind. Und entsprechend ist die Welt nicht deshalb wirklich, weil die Möglichkeiten wirklich wären, die sie umfasst, sondern weil sie der Möglichkeitshorizont von Wirklichem ist.” *Ibid.*, 141–142.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 141–149.

⁴²⁴ “Man kann dieses erkenntniskritische Weltkonzept semiotisch erweitern, indem man das Weltliche nicht auf das Erfahrbare beschränkt, sondern mit dem Bezeichenbaren gleichsetzt. Dann verliert es seine kritische Pointe, weil es nichts gibt, was nicht bezeichnet werden könnte und damit nicht ‘weltlich’ wäre. Man kann den Akzent zur Bestimmung des Weltlichen auch von der Für-Relation (‘Welt für ...’) auf die Von-Relation (‘Welt von ...’) verlagern und phänomenologisch ‘Welt’ als das bestimmen, was als Bestimmbarkeitshorizont von Wirklichem fungiert.” *Ibid.*, 143.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*

designated. This pertains to a *heuristic notion of the world*. It is a notion explained by Dalferth as a “horizon of the determinable [*Bestimmbarkeithorizont*].”⁴²⁶

‘World’ becomes a heuristic concept by which we disclose the possibilities of the real. It designates the horizon of possibilities that is co-positd by every instance of reality but that is not itself an independent reality. The world, so understood, would not appear in an (imaginary) inventory of all that is real; rather what would appear would always have the determination of *the worldliness* of the horizon: The world is real because everything real exists *worldly*, that is, in a horizon of possibilities that allows it to be different than it is.⁴²⁷

The idea of horizons employed by Dalferth in his explication of different aspects of the concept of world applies to the model of domains as unfolded in the Schellingian domain-ontology.⁴²⁸ That something is *real* is a question of the worldliness provided by the horizon of possibilities. In domain-ontological discourse, this pertains to determination as positing in a domain. While the ontological discourse has a focus on existence as the worldliness of domains, Dalferth’s phenomenological explication refers directly to the reality-aspect as the worldliness of horizons. I take these to be mutually illuminating. Schelling’s domain-ontological model is left open to a phenomenological explication. This compatibility can also be seen in Dalferth’s semiotic extension of Kant’s ideal of reason.

That we have a world is due to its disclosure in language and signs. The world is that in which we live and relate to other human beings. The world is not present to us in a mysterious way, but in the fact that we are engaged in determinate relations. That the world consists of our determinate reality shows the ways in which language is ever so deeply implied. Language reflects *the way* in which we have the world, namely, as a way of living. Dalferth underlines this aspect of world-inhabitation. “[W]e not only ‘have’ a world, we live in it.”⁴²⁹ *Human life therefore determines the way in which*

⁴²⁶ Ibid.

⁴²⁷ “‘Welt’ wird damit ein heuristisches Konzept zur Erschließung der Möglichkeiten eines Wirklichen. Es bezeichnet den bei jedem Wirklichen mitgesetzten Möglichkeitshorizont, aber ist nicht selbst ein eigenständiges Wirkliches. In einem (imaginären) Inventar alles Wirklichen käme die so verstandene Welt nicht vor, sondern was in ihm vorkäme, hätte stets die Horizontbestimmung des Weltlichen: Die Welt ist wirklich, weil und insofern alles Wirkliche weltlich existiert, also in einem Horizont von Möglichkeiten, die ihm anders wirklich zu sein erlauben, als es ist.” Ibid.

⁴²⁸ The Kantian ambience of Dalferth’s thinking supports this linkage. In this regard, it should be noticed that Kant himself employed the metaphor of horizon. “Every concept may be regarded as a point which, as the Station for an observer, has its own horizon, that is, a variety of things which can be represented, and, as it were surveyed from that standpoint.” Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 686f.

⁴²⁹ Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 116.

we have a world. Dalferth makes clear that human beings not *only* relate through language, but also fail to ever relate without or outside of language.

[It] applies to our relationship to the world that it takes place in a space of our common lived, understood, and spoken language, in which the world is always already disclosed, by each of us, in a specific, contingent and quite variable and understandable way. Only in this way is it our world, and the only reason why it can be incomprehensible and closed in so many respects.⁴³⁰

Hence, the world in which we live is a world that we can articulate. The world is therefore more than the sum total of the real and the possible, but also the world in which we interact *in concreto* with the aspects of the real and the possible. These are the 'sense-coherences' (*Sinnzusammenhänge*) expressed in human co-existence. Consequently, the worldliness of the given is always anchored in our particular life, which squares with the ontological situation developed in Schelling's notion of personhood. Within Schelling's ontology, personhood serves as a bridge to phenomenological explication.

Finally, Dalferth points out that the world (as the worldliness of the given) is disclosed in determinate situations. This does not imply that every situation has one determined meaning or right way of being understood. The reality of the world is the reality of phenomena.⁴³¹ Phenomena are real, as objects of interpretation, and do not represent any reality behind themselves. Phenomena are meaningful as worldly. Phenomena are always phenomena *for someone*; phenomena are experiences for someone who interprets phenomena through the possibility of the real, which is their particular possibility.⁴³²

With the concept of phenomenon we can understand the notion of determinate being as it is presented in Schelling. According to Schelling's model, things are made determinate on the basis of the predicative being-

⁴³⁰ "[Es] gilt für unser Verhältnis zur Welt: Es vollzieht sich im Raum einer gemeinsam gelebten, verstandenen und gesprochenen Sprache, in der jedem von uns die Welt immer schon in bestimmter, kontingenter und durchaus veränderlicher Weise erschlossen und verständlich ist. Nur so ist sie unsere Welt, und nur deshalb kann uns unsere Welt auch in so vielen Hinsichten unverständlich und verschlossen sein." Ibid., 116 n1.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 127–132.

⁴³² "Was aber sind Phänomene? Nicht das, was in platonisch-augustinisch inspirierten Zugängen zuweilen als Verleiblichung oder Wirklichwerden des Wortes beschrieben wird, sondern das, was man das *Wortwerden von Wirklichem im Horizont der Sprache* bzw. Allgemeiner: das *Zeichenwerden von Wirklichem im Horizont einer Deute- oder Interpretationspraxis* nennen könnte. Genauer gesagt: Ein Phänomen ist ein Akt lebensweltlichen Verstehens im Horizont einer eingespielten Verstehenspraxis. Dieser Akt ist zugleich *wirklichkeitsinformiert* und *wirklichkeitsinterpretativ*." Ibid., 127f.

in-the-world of the person. As Dalferth points out, phenomena are meaningful insofar as they pertain to a concrete, particular human person. Hence, phenomena are always already determined within a particular horizon and interpretive praxis. Phenomena have the form of so-called *as-structures*, through which their structure takes a determinate form. They are understood as something determinate.⁴³³ The as-structure is not itself what is understood, only the structure of the phenomena. According with Schelling, we would say that it is the way in which they are posited in logical space. Phenomena are not themselves experienced *as* phenomena, but as determinate things within determinate situations. It is the determinate things that are the objects of our experience. It is only phenomenological reflection that discloses the phenomena as such.

8.5 Contingency and Orientation

Orientation requires order (*das Ordnen*). Furthermore, orientation serves to support one's ability to locate oneself within that order (Dalferth calls it '*das Orten*').⁴³⁴ For the sake of successful orientation, the world, as reflected in meaningful situations, is ordered when one has obtained a certain familiarity with the phenomena of the world. An order enables us to determine how phenomena relate to each other. However, orientation also requires that we are able to locate ourselves within this order. Phenomena are not sufficiently ordered when they are only ordered *in themselves*. Familiarity reflects that the order of phenomena provides the possibility of the person to locate oneself in the world, that is, when the world is ordered *for me*. Lacking the ability to locate ourselves within the order, we fail to establish the necessary relation and order *for us*. The relations of ordered things enable our orientation when they are put into relation with us, that is, when being becomes relative *to us*. It is in this condition of relative location that the problem of contingency resides.

Cosmology is the underlying idea of *an order of the world* in the life-worldly dimension. This is how Dalferth's theory of orientation pertains to a composition of a first-person cosmology. However, in Dalferth's existential-phenomenological view, cosmology is understood first-personally in its verbal form as a *cosmologizing* that we provide as a matter of interpretation. In religion, human beings interpret their world as the world in which they live and interact. Dalferth explains that the idea of an order amounts to sketching out or proposing a mapping. Any order is incomplete, insofar as it has been sketched from a standpoint that is not itself within that order. The point of vantage from which an order is

⁴³³ Ibid., 128.

⁴³⁴ Dalferth sketches these basic conditions of orientation in chapters A 11 and 12. Ibid., 34–41.

sketched is not itself a part of the order. Dalferth's idea of orders, therefore, echoes the problem of origin as derived from Schelling's domain-ontology.

Dalferth asserts that every order has a 'blind spot', which is its own point of conception (its origin). The order is not necessarily sketched from the aspect of its use in orientation. The conception of any order always lies outside of the order itself (lying instead within another order). In principle, there is no way of stepping outside of order (as such), or of ordering anything from a neutral stance. When order has been established, it is, in principle, from within another order, which means that any regress to prior or more fundamental (*original*) orders can be infinite, and hence, there is no "order of all possible orders."⁴³⁵

Given that the conception of an order is never a part of the order itself, the world is inevitably conceived through perspectives, perspectives that are constitutive of orders. Dalferth employs a notion of perspectives, not necessarily in the sense used by Nagel, but in the sense of a position, as is discussed in Schelling. Perspective pertains to position in the sense that it evokes contingency. No perspective has everything in its reach. Consequently, the world comes into view from particular standpoints that belong to the world itself. This implies different levels of contingency, which pertain to a multi-dimensional space of contingency. Dalferth sketches a *structural contingency of orders* within which there is an *individual contingency of orientation* that makes use of these orders. These dimensions of contingency (one of order and one of localization) form a space of infinite possibilities without absolute coordinates. This is the space within which human living and interaction takes place, it is the space of orientation.⁴³⁶

The condition of the world, as a world that comes in view through a multiplicity of standpoints, reflects a social reality. In practice, in human society, orientation involves the encounter and exchange of multiple cognitive and normative differences. Social interaction is fundamental to our orientation, through which one can adapt and adjust to common paths of orientation. Dalferth emphasizes the fundamental factor of emotional qualities involved in successful interaction. Structures and patterns of

⁴³⁵ Ibid., 37.

⁴³⁶ "Die strukturelle Kontingenz der Ordnungen, mit deren Hilfe wir uns im Leben orientieren, und die individuelle Kontingenz unserer Orientierung mit Hilfe dieser Ordnungen (also unseres Gebrauchs dieser Ordnungen) ergeben einen nie auszuschöpfenden Spielraum, in dem wir unser gemeinsames Leben in Beziehung zueinander und zu Dritten gestalten können. Weil uns weder die Ordnungen, in denen wir uns orientieren, definitiv festlegen, noch die Ortungen, die wir in ihrem Horizont vornehmen, unveränderlich fixieren, können wir in einer immer wieder Neues erschließenden und entdeckenden Weise unser Leben gemeinsam vollziehen." Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 248.

social interaction and organization, such as those found amongst family, friends, colleagues, or other group-patterns, are all part of our orientational structures, serving as means of orientation. Situations of orientation are always determined through the orientational order available to us, and are further determined by unarticulated emotional intuitions and impressions as well. Every orientating agent carries certain impressions from experiences that further influence the situational orientation. In everything we do, we order our world and determine our position in it for the benefit of the life we enjoy as human beings.

Despite the similarities between Dalferth's notion of orientation and the components of Schelling's domain-ontology, there seems to be a difference that opens up for a critique of Dalferth at this central place: the order of orientation that provides localization seems inevitably to establish the human being (the one localizing) at the center of orientation. The orientation is in this sense first-personal. However, since we can never be outside order, the aspect of disorientation seems to require something else, which conflicts with this composition of first-personal ordering and localizing. We are in the world, but if we follow Schelling, we are not placed at the center. The contingency of the world has the effect that we are never in the world as a center, we are always in a kind of allocation, because we are determined by an otherness to which we respond as decentered. As far as I know, Dalferth does not consider this aspect. Schelling's notion of unprethinkable being provides this aspect of his anthropology that we are never in control of our world, we have never chosen the challenges it confronts us with. I would suggest that the contingency of the world implies, for the orienting human being, that the center is that which we can never arrive at. And *that* is the world of orientation, as it pertains to contingency. Orientation is itself the condition of being decentered. As Schelling puts it: "The fear of life itself drives man out of the *centrum*."⁴³⁷ Orientation, even in the form Dalferth presents it, should be understood as decentered or never resting at a center.

8.6 Transcendence and Religion

Conditions of orientation apply to religious orientation. Religion becomes a way of ordering the world and obtaining proper means for orientation to the extent that orientation is a matter of human life. The symbolic structures of religion, according to Dalferth, reflect the *experiences*, the *understanding*, and the *order* of the world and the lives of human beings.

Religious practice supports the task of locating oneself and employing a symbolic order that enables situational orientation in life and world experiences. The symbolic register of religions relates to both cognitive as

⁴³⁷ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 47; *SW*, VII 381.

well as emotional dimensions of human experience. As an expression of these experiences, the symbolic systems of religion further support the orientational challenges in one's life and world experiences. The collective dimension of religious practice, which is fundamental, remains anchored in personal and individual experiences. Participation in religious practice provides collective experiences that are constituted by individual experiences that serve as correctives for the collective.

Fundamentally, religious orientation responds to the contingency of the world. Religious orientation does not dissolve the conditions of contingency, but is conditioned by these same premises. A religious orientation towards an absolute divinity nonetheless remains *orientation*, and it remains a *contingent* orientation not unlike other forms of orientation. Religious orientation is (like every other sort of orientation) working amongst alternatives such as other religions or non-religious forms of orientation. Atheistic orientation is always an option and an alternative to religious orientation. However, it is decisive to note that while atheism can be an alternative to religion as a form of orientation, it is not an alternative to orientation as such. Orientation, in whatever form it takes (cultural, ideological, or religious), is fundamental to the lives of humans, and this without exception.

A human life is in need of orientation insofar as meaning is never complete and phenomena of various irrational characters reveal that orientation can never rule out the contingency of our orders of orientation, their incompatibility, and their limited functionality. Life entails uncontrollable and incomprehensible situations. From one of the roots of the word 'religion', *religare* ('ligare'), we find the etymological meaning 'to bind,' or 'to re-attach' something that has been separated or detached. Dalferth draws on this meaning for his understanding of religion as providing coherence to both the comprehensible and the incomprehensible.

In many regards, Dalferth follows Luhmann's reflections on religious phenomena.⁴³⁸ For Luhmann, religion represents a parallel structure to reality by virtue of an immanence/transcendence encoding.⁴³⁹ In the religious convictions of transcendence (a transcendent world, or a transcendent God), religious practice addresses 'a beyond' which it seeks to relate to. Luhmann's understanding of the immanence/transcendence code aims to distinguish the familiar from the unfamiliar, and the

⁴³⁸ Niklas Luhmann, *Die Religion der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000).

⁴³⁹ The religiously articulated transcendence is here understood as a procedure of meaning-making. "Irgendwelchen Dingen oder Ereignissen wird eine besondere Bedeutung verliehen, die sie aus der gewöhnlichen Welt (in der sie zugänglich bleiben) herausnimmt und mit einer besonderen ‚Aura‘, mit besonderen Referenzkreisen ausstattet." Ibid., 58. Quoted from Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 81.

determined from the indeterminate.⁴⁴⁰ Luhmann's idea of religion as a social communication provides an understanding of religious phenomena as binding the indeterminate to the determinable by means of a 're-entry' of the transcendence/immanence distinction into the immanent.⁴⁴¹

Dalferth employs Luhmann's take on religion as a system-theoretical approach and a reformulation of phenomenological insights. He follows Luhmann's over-all characterization of religion: religion is the guarantor of determinability of all sense against a fundamental experience of *indeterminability*.⁴⁴² Dalferth's notion of orientation is therefore a phenomenological application of Luhmann's system-theoretical approach to religion. This implies that a central feature of religious forms of orientation lies in their ability "to keep *transcendence* in sight as the backside of *immanence*, to place the *familiar* against the background of the *unfamiliar*."⁴⁴³ This must be understood as a consciousness about *the meaning we have* in a way that enables us to hold on to it, despite the threat of meaninglessness and chaos (madness, as Schelling sees it).⁴⁴⁴ This notion of transcendence is phenomenologically formulated along with the idea of the appearing or showing of the phenomenon, a showing that always entails the presence of something concealed, something that withdraws. In what shows itself, such showing comes about against the background of that which withdraws. This phenomenological application articulates features that are, in Schelling's ontology, implemented in the notion of unprethinkable being.

⁴⁴⁰ Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 78–82. Luhmann does not claim to provide a definition for religion, but addresses religion as that in society which describes itself as religion. "Wir schreiben nicht vor, wir nehmen hin, was sich selbst als Religion beschreibt." Luhmann, *Die Religion der Gesellschaft*, 58. Dalferth adds, "Religion ist das, was in einer Gesellschaft als Religion beobachtet werden kann; und was das ist, entscheidet sich in der Selbstbeobachtung des Religionssystems einer Gesellschaft." Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 82.

⁴⁴¹ If religion is understood through the familiar/unfamiliar distinction "dann entsteht Religion erst durch ein re-entry dieser Form in die Form: durch einen Wiedereintritt der Differenz von vertraut/unvertraut ins Vertraute und Umgängliche. Denn nur so kann man das religiös Unvertraute (die Transzendenz) unterscheiden von dem, was bloß unbekannt oder ungewöhnlich ist." Luhmann, *Die Religion der Gesellschaft*, 83.

⁴⁴² "Religion garantiert die Bestimmbarkeit allen Sinnes gegen die miterlebte Verweisung ins Unbestimmbare." Ibid., 127.

⁴⁴³ "[...] Transzendenz als permanente Rückseite der Immanenz in Erinnerung halten, das Vertraute also vor dem Hintergrund des Nichtvertraute plazieren." Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 250.

⁴⁴⁴ The potential of Dalferth's thinking, for an actualization of Schelling's thinking, lies in the way that Dalferth, in the question of orientation, offers a way to understand Schellingian personhood as the basis for orientation in the world. Personhood, as mentioned, portrays this as decentered.

The composition of the phenomenon reflects the dual structure of religion; Dalferth goes so far as to call it the *paradoxical structure of religion*, which

can be described as the differentiated attempt to connect [*zurückzubinden*] the areas of the indeterminable, the inaccessible, the chaotic, the meaningless, the unavailable, the incomprehensible, and not controllable to the areas of rationally determined orders and meaningful comprehensible structures, that is, to articulate them as the other and as the (in themselves and as such) not tangible backside of the meaningful [*Sinnvollen*], the available and the controllable.⁴⁴⁵

Understanding religion as ‘*connecting*’ these areas, Dalferth highlights four traits of religion. These traits illuminate the notion of transcendence and thereby reflect the semantic role of religion in human life. 1) The first trait is a *universalistic tendency* of religion concerning the withdrawal implied in every showing of a phenomenon, in which religion refers us to something that is always there in and with everything. Because all meaning stands out from meaninglessness, the universal aspect is fundamental. 2) The second trait pertains to the unique categorical difference of that which is present with everything as the ‘*presence of the concealed*’ (*die Anwesenheit des Nichtwahrnehmbaren*). In this regard, the nature of the concealed implies that it does not appear like other things and that an awareness of it requires special occasions. Religion offers different ways of disclosing the presence of the concealed in the form of revelations, myths, and rites.

3) The third trait concerns the same categorical difference that makes it impossible to determine the concealed, which is why religion enables an *indirect articulation*. Only with reference to a showing can the concealed be articulated. Religions provide fundamental differences, distinctions, and paradoxes that outline the categorical difference between that which is determinable and that which escapes any possible determination. 4) The fourth trait follows from the impossibility of determining the indeterminable. Religions offer no ultimate illumination, only *continuous attempts to articulate the ‘inconceivable backside of the conceivable’* and to communicate and symbolize this fundamental distinction between that which shows itself and that which makes the showing possible by withdrawing itself (what is concealed in the showing).

Dalferth’s point is that religion conserves and maintains the inconceivable as such, and that it does so without making it conceivable. Recognizing the boundaries of these fundamental distinctions enables a protection of the boundaries within human practices of living by offering cognitive and emotional structures for living with the uncontrollable in the controllable. “The point of religions is not to make the uncontrollable

⁴⁴⁵ Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 83.

controllable but to enable us to live with the uncontrollable in a controllable way.”⁴⁴⁶

Dalferth explicates that coping with these areas of the incomprehensible and the indeterminable requires an articulation of the passivity that is experienced when one's life and usual living is interrupted (e.g. death, misfortune, greater changes, despair).⁴⁴⁷ Religious language, signs, and symbols approach the unavailable in either a *descriptive* or a *non-descriptive* manner. This is a hermeneutical reference to the understanding and self-understanding of religious orientation. In this distinction, it counts whether a religion gives positive expression to the uncontrollable and unavailable (what Dalferth calls *imaginative religion*), or whether it gives expression by means of limit-concepts (what Dalferth calls *reflective religion*).

Imaginative religion seeks to give meaning to the uncontrollable through descriptions of a religious counter-world over and against the present world (e.g. a spiritual world). The strategies of the religious cult concern the means for relating to this ‘other world.’ The rational structures of the religious symbols of the counter-world enable an articulation of the experienced world (this world), as well as the conditions of life within such a world in such a way as to provide patterns that are formative of the experiences of the present world. These (rational) structures provide a strategy for orientation. Saying something concerning the counter-world, for example to say that it is *the real world* of which this world is only a fraud, is a way of forming one's life *in the present world*. Hence, doctrines of a transcendent world, e.g. as the real world, pertain to a *way of living in the present world* through a transcendent perspective. It is a way of

⁴⁴⁶ “Die Pointe von Religionen ist nicht, das Unkontrollierbare kontrollierbar zu machen, sondern es uns zu ermöglichen, auf kontrollierbare Weise mit dem Unkontrollierbaren zu leben.” Dalferth, “Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung,” 252.

⁴⁴⁷ “In Religionen verarbeiten Menschen auf kulturproduzierende und kulturprägende Weise gemeinsame und individuelle Erfahrungen des Einbruchs von Unkontrollierbarem und Unverfügbarem in ihr Leben. Was so unverfügbar und unkontrollierbar in das Leben hereinbricht und den Gang des Gewohnten unterbricht, kann als ein unerwartetes Glück oder als etwas undurchschaubar Sinnloses erfahren werden. In beiden Fällen erleben Menschen sich ihm passiv ausgesetzt, und zwar in doppelter Hinsicht. Sie können das, was über sie hereinbricht, nicht nur nicht aktiv bewirken, kontrollieren und gestalten, sondern sie können sich ihm auch nicht entziehen oder auf Dauer leben, ohne solches zu erleben und Erfahrungen von Unverfügbarem zu machen. Insofern versuchen Menschen in Religionen etwas symbolisch zu bearbeiten, von dem sie wissen oder wissen können, dass sie es aufgrund seiner Unkontrollierbarkeit nicht bearbeiten und kontrollieren können, zugleich aber auch, dass sie angesichts der Unvermeidbarkeit von Unverfügbarem nicht leben können, ohne den Versuch zu machen, es zu bearbeiten.” Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 83–84.

orienting one's life in this world. The 'other world' can, in some religions, be depicted as perfect, as a desirable alternative to the present world, *or* it can entail a horrific thread by virtue of which the present life is put into perspective. This dualism can, in some instances, concern not only a distinction between this world and a counter-world, but also a distinction within the counter-world itself. A traditional example mentioned by Dalferth is the distinction between *light* and *heaven* over against *darkness* and *hell*.

Because both aspects of 'the other world' are described as realities by which the reality of the present world is determined, the religious semantics of religions is more than ontologically realistic, it is also axiologically valuing and methodologically strictly contrasting.⁴⁴⁸

Reflected religion does not articulate any meaning of the uncontrollable. It simply keeps the uncontrollable in sight, as the backside of the meaningful, which is both available and controllable. In other words, reflected religions articulate the genuine otherness as an otherness of this world, and, in so doing, they maintain focus on this world as a religious world in which the meaningless and uncontrollable is accepted as all-pervasive. Both imaginative and reflected religion respond to a fundamental existential anxiety for "life's radical threat of the comprehensible possibility of absolute chaos, counter-rational, uncontrollable, meaningless, evil."⁴⁴⁹

Thus, religion is to understand in both its rational and non-rational (irrational) side, that is, in its feature of providing a meaningful relation between the meaningful and the meaningless. The relation of both sides is the decisive aspect without which a religion cannot provide its basic function. Dalferth points to 'rational religion', as it is advocated in the enlightenment, as an example of a conception of religion that lost its ability

⁴⁴⁸ "Weil sie beide Aspekte der 'anderen Welt' als Wirklichkeiten beschreibt, von denen die Wirklichkeit dieser Welt bestimmt werden, ist die religiöse Semantik imaginativer Religionen nicht nur ontologisch realistisch, sondern auch axiologisch wertend und methodisch strikt kontrastierend." Ibid., 85. Dalferth goes on explicating, "Sie stellt das gegenwärtige Leben in das Licht einer Gegenwelt, die ihrerseits dual als 'Himmel' und 'Hölle' und als solche durch einen nicht selten als Kampfgeschehen dargestellten Grundgegensatz zwischen Licht und Dunkel konzipiert ist. Entsprechend wird auch die gegenwärtige Welt im Licht dieser Kontraste dualistisch verstanden als eine Welt, die erhellt wird durch das Licht bzw. verdunkelt wird durch die Schatten, die von der 'anderen Welt' her in sie einfallen. Und die Aufgabe religiösen Lebens wird darin gesehen, in der Orientierung an der Gegenwelt, in der die Gegensätze von 'Himmel' und 'Hölle' in ihren Prinzipien durchschaubar werden, die Schatten des Dunklen zu meiden und die Helligkeit des Lichtes zu suchen, die von dort in diese Welt einfallen und sie bestimmen." Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 85f.

⁴⁴⁹ Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 86.

to relate to the “unavailable otherness.”⁴⁵⁰ This remains illuminating for the motivations behind criticisms of religious worldviews. Dalferth writes: “Against the tendencies of society to limit life to the mere rational, religion is the disturbing reminder of the appresence of the non-rational in the rational.”⁴⁵¹

Another central way in which religion provides connectivity between the rational and the non-rational is in conceptions of *God* (or *Gods*) and *the divine*. Starting from the theistic conception that God is “the ground and guarantee of sense and order as well as the background, lord and limit of the senseless and chaotic [...]”,⁴⁵² Dalferth goes on to describe different constellations where either different Gods or the one God represent meaning or the meaningless. Religions articulate notions of both God(s) and of ‘the divine.’ Particularly, Dalferth stresses a lack of semantic correspondence between understandings of the concept of the divine across religions. Nevertheless, he claims that an underlying consensus lies in the pragmatic function of the divine, which symbolizes the polar tension between sense and non-sense, the rational and the non-rational.⁴⁵³

Religion provides semantic tools for an orientation in life that enables the individual to maintain life’s limited rational basis in the face of the non-rational and unavailable otherness. Religion provides this in both collective and inter-human meanings that are provided by collective religious practices. In such practices, transcendence provides the orientation required for living a decent life, that is, the orientation that navigates by the unavailable otherness of life. Hence, religion is the

common [gemeinschaftliche] life-orientation by unavailable otherness. It is not only private religiosity [...] but the common life-praxis in which human beings align themselves to an otherness through which they know themselves to be positively determined without being able to grasp or control it. In religious life-orientation human beings relate to a reality that transcend their life [...].⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 92.

⁴⁵¹ “Sie [Religion] ist die kultisch und vorstellungsförmig praktizierte Verknüpfung des Nichtrationalen mit dem Rationalen, die Beziehung des Unbestimmbaren auf das Bestimmte, in der das Bestimmte gegen den Hintergrund des Unbestimmbaren und das Unbestimmbare vom Bestimmten her in den Blick gerückt wird. Gegen gesellschaftliche Tendenzen, das Leben ganz auf das Rationale zu beschränken, ist Religion so die störende Erinnerung an die Appräsenz des Nichtrationalen im Rationalen.” Ibid., 88.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ “Im Gottesverständnis spiegelt sich so die fundamentale Spannung zwischen Sinn und Sinnlosem, Verfügbarem und Unverfügbarem, die in den Religionen bearbeitet wird.” Ibid., 91.

⁴⁵⁴ “[G]elebte Religion [ist] *gemeinschaftliche Lebensorientierung an unverfügbarer Andersheit*. Sie ist nicht nur private Religiosität [...] sondern *gemeinschaftliche*

Lebenspraxis, in der Menschen sich an einer *Andersheit* ausrichten, von der sie sich positive bestimmt wissen, ohne sie als solche begreifen oder kontrollieren zu können. In religiöser Lebensorientierung beziehen Menschen ihr Leben auf eine es überschreitende Wirklichkeit [...] Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 262.

9 World-Inhabitation

9.1 Absolute Orientation

The approaches to religion adopted by Nagel and Dalferth are different, and yet they are compatible. For Nagel, the question of the religious temper derives from a natural concern with the world. This concern reflects how human life seeks to take form through its perception of the world. Therefore, subjectivity becomes an issue. Nagel attempts to solve the problem of the world-relation with his model of perspectives (internal-external, subjective and objective) as a matter of understanding. Understanding the world-relation, and the possibility of a naturalistic understanding of the world, was the primary focus of the discussion in part one. Now we have gained other means for understanding and discussing the question of how the human being relates to the world and why the world is an important question. However, we have also developed a way in which to understand in what sense the world is something to us even before we ask for it. The world we ask for or seek to understand is posited in our very presupposition and will always be. This suggests that the question of the world responds to a condition, more than a particular lack of knowledge of something particular. The question of the world seeks to give answers to our condition as not having a steady world. This condition is our need for orientation.

Dalferth approaches religion as a way for human beings to obtain orientation in life. The compatibility between Nagel's and Dalferth's approaches lies in the way religion is understood as entailing a concern with the world as our condition. As opposed to religious naturalism, religion is understood in its concern with the condition of the human world-relation. In Nagel, the cosmic question reflects a world-relation, in the form of a need to establish a ground for one's life in something greater than oneself that combines one with the whole. For Dalferth, this is simply what constitutes the need for orientation; hence, the world-relation *is* the condition of orientation.

We approach religion as a human way of orienting one's living in the world such that it becomes formative of this life. It should not be overlooked that this is an understanding of religion that can also be disputed on the anthropological level (religion as a human disposition). While it is through both Nagel and Dalferth that we have established this notion of religion, in Dalferth we find a basis for correcting Nagel's notion of subjectivity.

Understanding religion as a human disposition for orientation places religion on an anthropological level insofar as it squares with a non-religious setting. The focus is not God, but religion; it is only to the extent

that God is a concern for religion that God is an object under consideration. This means that the concern with the world expressed in religion pertains to a human concern. The initial formulation of the human prerogative was the idea of *first-person cosmology*. Dalferth has shown how this pertains to orientation as a matter of ordering the world and locating oneself in that order. However, the fundamental aspect of the need for orientation, and we might have addressed this most directly with Schelling, is that the world is something to which the human being relates in a certain way that presents it with a condition of contingency. This is the condition that the human being can never have the world as its object. It is due to this condition – and I have described it as a condition of allocation – that orientation is decisive of how the human being lives a human life.

If we return to the question of embeddedness, Schelling's thought can still be made more explicit. From the very outset, Schelling's ontology of freedom can be understood as a philosophy of embeddedness. This was unfolded through the three stages of *proposition*, *position* and *personhood*. In this regard, it is crucial to understand that Schelling understands subjectivity as a problem (as a 'fall' and not as a 'telos'), and his way of formulating subjectivity, as a problem, is with his notion of personhood.⁴⁵⁵ As a person, the human being is aware of and self-conscious of its own subjectivity as finitude (conscious finitude) and thereby has a sense of its condition and of this condition *as* its relation to the world. This suggests that we are aware of these conditions both in terms of the world in which we live and in the way of living on these conditions. Schelling and Dalferth both articulate the great threats to the meaningful life, in the possibility of the incomprehensible that can never be overcome.

The question of embeddedness is, for Schelling, staged as our embeddedness in being. The central component is the facticity of being. The facticity of being is determining for the way the human being is determined by being. Facticity will always precede us. From the perspective of the ontology of predication, this means that that about which we judge comes prior to any judgment. Yet our intentional being, and our living in logical space, implies that we always find ourselves in, and engaged with, determinate being. The facticity of being therefore marks an

⁴⁵⁵ Sturma characterizes Schelling's notion of personhood as "die Festlegung des Orts individueller Existenz in der Welt und die Analyse der sich daraus ergebenden Konsequenzen. Der positive Begriff der Freiheit fällt für Schelling dementsprechend in die Ontologie vernünftiger endlicher Existenz bzw. in die Ontologie der Person, nicht etwa in die Moralphilosophie. [...] Subjektivität ist in der ontologischen und existentiellen Ausformung der Selbstheit kein Königsweg zu Wahrheit und Moral, sondern als Freisetzung von Individualität qua Individualität ein Abfall, ein Heraustreten aus dem Allgemeinen und seinen naturbestimmten Ordnungen." Sturma, "Präreflexive Freiheit und menschliche Selbstbestimmung," 157–158.

ultimate limit. It reflects human finitude insofar as we are bound to a semantic dimension of determinate being through which we can never ultimately disclose the presupposition that makes it possible. The point is that the world therefore only comes into view through the determinations we have and the way we have them. As addressed in the reading of Dalférth, this is what the phenomenological tradition calls *worldliness*.

The idea of worldliness pertains to the way I have tried to give meaning to the notion of world-inhabitation. It is the embeddedness that we can never escape, and it is an embeddedness that we seek to come to terms with. It precedes us. "Once we find ourselves in the world, the world is always already there."⁴⁵⁶ We are embedded in being in the sense that we have not decided the semantic point of departure of our thinking for ourselves. For example, when modern human beings dedicate themselves to an ideological standpoint, they have not chosen the world in which this standpoint is possible. The possibilities of the world are given in advance for us to operate and navigate in. The condition of self-formation is, in the form of facticity, a fundamental otherness by which we are ourselves determined. This is the underlying heteronomy of human autonomy.

In regard to the facticity of being, Gabriel's interpretation of Schelling's employment of the notion of God is rather helpful. In his notion of God, says Gabriel, Schelling reflects the facticity of an intelligible world in the sense that being reflects itself in determinate being. As has already been discussed, the self-consciousness of being has a history, its coming-to-be what it is, which is the central concern of positive philosophy. However, Gabriel further shows that in God, the human being expresses its most fundamental desires, which is not only 'the possibility of another being,' but desires to reach beyond being.⁴⁵⁷ As Schelling puts it: "I want that which is above being."⁴⁵⁸ This is the positing of God as that which is above (contingent) being. In the positing of God, God is *as* God, that is, a free, personal being, *the lord of being*, as Schelling designates it. The 'person seeking person' dictum finds its meaning in the positing of God as a reaching out above the contingency of being. The otherness of facticity expressed in God is both an otherness *for the person* and a determining *of the person*. In this sense, it is *the otherness that evokes personhood*.

Personhood is shaped in the moment of shaping the world. This mutual determination is expressed in the understanding of the person as the world-inhabitor. The order of the world is dictated within this notion of a God-

⁴⁵⁶ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, 91.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 95; Gabriel, *Der Mensch im Mythos*, 234–367, esp. §15.

⁴⁵⁸ "Die positive Philosophie könnte möglicherweise rein für sich anfangen, mit dem bloßen Ausspruch: "Ich will das, was über dem Seyn ist", und wir werden sehen, wie der wirkliche Uebergang in sie in der That durch ein solches Wollen geschieht." *SW*, XI 564.

human relation that is constitutive for personhood. The God-human relation, if we follow this reading of Gabriel, determines a response to facticity in the reaching out above the contingent world. Facticity is, for the person, an unprethinkable otherness. But in the relation to God *as* God it is an absolute relation in the sense of being an absolute origin of personhood.⁴⁵⁹ Turning to Dalferth, we find a similar distinction of absoluteness (not *the* absolute) in the understanding of religious orientation. Dalferth seeks to illuminate the absolute aspect of orientation as a fundamental aspect in orientation one can comport oneself to. He therefore calls this comportment *absolute orientation* and asserts that such an aspect of orientation offers a way in which to understand religious orientation as a response to the very conditions of the contingency of the world. It is at this point that I see a certain possibility of mutual interpretation between Schelling's notion of personhood and Dalferth's notion of religious orientation. Let me show how.

For Dalferth, the question 'Why is there something and not rather nothing?' is a question that expresses the problem of orientation in human life.⁴⁶⁰ The question gives expression to the scope of what can be questioned, that is, to the scope of what is not obvious (necessary) but contingent. The possibility of questioning everything (*that* everything can be questioned) reflects an awareness of contingency in two fundamental respects: 1) what is, could also not be; and 2) what is, could also be different. If everything is contingent (could not be, or could be different), then how can one gain a steady hold from which to 'locate' oneself and shape one's living? This depicts the situation of orientation in human life as it pertains to the sense of contingency that guides the fundamental questions of orientation. Dalferth suggests, in the conditions of contingency, the possibility of an absolute 'aspect.' *Absolute orientation* is the orientation by means of which everyone in every situation of orientation stands in the same relation to each other. This is not exclusive orientation, but an overlay to the particular orientation that one has (Dalferth differentiates between *local* and *absolute* orientation).

As Dalferth depicts this, there is an undeniable necessity (*absolute reality*) in the life of contingency and in how we locate ourselves within a

⁴⁵⁹ I want to add that we find many expressions of this throughout Schelling's text, also in the *Freiheitsschrift*. Here, we have the expression that God requires an image of God self (*Ebenbild*), which Schelling calls the God generated or posited in God self. "[Daß] Gott sich selbst in einem Ebenbilde erblickt. Diese Vorstellung ist das Erste, worin Gott, absolut betrachtet, verwirklicht ist, obgleich nur in ihm selbst, sie ist im Anfange bei Gott, und der *in* Gott gezeugte Gott selbst." Ibid., VII 361. See also the passage *SW*, VII 363.

⁴⁶⁰ Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 149.

contingent world. As I see it, the absolute aspect pertains to the fundamental condition of heteronomy that underlies human life-orientation as an allocation. Orientation can be absolute, not because it can identify an absolute being, but because it comports its orientation to an absolute aspect that lies beyond the contingency of the world. It is that which in every *now and here* (both of one's life and of everyone's life) stands in the same relation to everyone and everyone's relation to everyone else. Dalferth says, "It is that reality, without which there would be no possibility and consequently also no life and no orientation in the world, and for that reason it is different in principle from everything real and possible."⁴⁶¹

That which in Schelling's formulation is an unprethinkable facticity of being and its self-consciousness in the notion of God (God posited *as* God) has, in terms of a situation of orientation, a similar point of absolute orientation. Seen in this way, we can reflect this point in the notion of personhood: in comporting oneself to this absolute aspect one becomes what one equally is with everyone else.⁴⁶² We should not understand this in a spatial way, but in personhood, as a potency. Schelling calls it *spirit*. "[T]hrough its unity with the ideal principle [the self] becomes *spirit*. Selfhood *as* such is spirit; or man is spirit as a selfish [*selbstisch*], particular being (separated from God) – precisely this connection constitutes personality."⁴⁶³ The relation to God as spirit, reflects a two-fold relation to God: in its selfhood the human being is 'particular being,' separated from God; however, in the unity with God, *the connection that constitutes personality*, the human being becomes spirit. Spirit *is* the being-in-God.⁴⁶⁴ Dalferth's elaboration of the ethical implications of this is the idea of becoming everyone's *neighbour*. Dalferth's intention is to show an aspect of religious orientation *as* a self-formative aspect: the aspect of orientation that is able to articulate the self-understanding of the human being in the conditions of orientation. Absolute orientation not only establishes a basis for understanding oneself, but it also establishes the

⁴⁶¹ Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 153.

⁴⁶² Dalferth has explicated the idea of absolute orientation further in Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 262–266. "Die Pointe der Orientierung an dieser Wirklichkeit des Möglichen ist, daß man sich in Beziehung zu ihr lebensweltlich nicht lokalisieren kann, ohne sich und alles andere von ihr zu unterscheiden und zugleich in einer solchen Beziehung zu ihr zu lokalisieren, in der auch jeder andere sich und alles andere lokalisieren kann." Dalferth, "Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung," 265.

⁴⁶³ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 33. "[Die Selbstheit wird] durch ihre Einheit mit dem idealen Princip *Geist* [...]. Die Selbstheit *als* solche ist Geist, oder der Mensch ist Geist als ein selbstisches, besonderes (von Gott geschiedenes) Wesen, welche Verbindung eben die Persönlichkeit ausmacht." *SW*, VII 364.

⁴⁶⁴ "Geist ist in Gott." *SW*, VII 364.

decisive relation that sets one in equal relation to everyone else in terms of *the common third*.

Through that, one becomes what one is in relation to God, by comporting oneself to the way God relates to oneself in an absolute, that is, not sufficiently grounded decision. One only becomes a subject paradoxically, that is, not through self-determination but only through absolute heteronomy – that is, through someone, who is subject, who relates to oneself as subject. In short: one becomes an ‘I’ by being addressed and treated as a ‘you’ by an ‘I.’⁴⁶⁵

Absolute orientation is comportment to the absolute heteronomy of facticity that, in such comportment, determines both oneself and one’s relation to everyone else. Self-determination is somehow forfeited insofar as the self gives itself over to its heteronomous condition. *Seeing oneself in this perspective transforms the one seeing from being the one seeing to being the one seen*. Regarding the person, Schelling’s notion of revelation comes to mind and Buchheim’s explication of an *empiricism of personhood* (chapter 7.3): a person can only be a person in the eyes of another person. There is a break from a fundamental feature of subjectivity in this idea of self-formation through revelation. It is a break from the first-person prerogative. The view changes from the view that one is, to *the view one is in*. Furthermore, the conditions for a first-person cosmology must be reformulated if we are to incorporate Dalferth’s notion of absolute orientation.

If religious orientation can be said to be transformative of the human being in a moment of absolute orientation, then the idea of first-person cosmology has the objective of establishing second-person conditions. First-person cosmology, in which one applies orders to the world and locates oneself within these orders, must, in absolute orientation, be understood as ordering according to the conditions of absolute heteronomy. It is only on this basis that first-person cosmology can provide second-person being.

We find in Dalferth’s notion of absolute orientation a break with anthropocentrism, and a way that Dalferth somehow discloses a dimension of decentered orientation. Another way in which he does this is in his emphasis on the pluralism of religious orientation. Dalferth’s motivation for explicating the absolute aspect in the form of an absolute orientation

⁴⁶⁵ “Denn dadurch wird man, was man im GottesVerhältnis ist, indem man sich in absoluter, nämlich aus nicht zureichend zu begründender Entscheidung aneignet, wie Gott sich zu einem verhält: nämlich als Subjekt zu einem Subjekt. Zum Subjekt wird man also nur paradox, nämlich gerade nicht durch eine Selbstbestimmung, sondern nur durch absolut Fremdbestimmung – durch nämlich, daß einer, der Subjekt ist, sich zu einem als Subjekt verhält. Oder kurz: Man wird zum Ich, indem man von einem anderen Ich als Du angesprochen und behandelt wird.” Dalferth, “Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung,” 265.

lies in his fundamental ambition to interpret and translate traditional problems of metaphysics into the human life-world.⁴⁶⁶ In fact, Dalferth sees any kind of ontology as a potential basis for orientation, or at least something that can be reformulated as an order of the world. Ontology can, however, never become an exclusive or ultimate basis for orientation. And that is the point, “in the horizon of absolute orientation the concrete pluralism of religious life-orientation is not overcome but affirmed.”⁴⁶⁷

9.2 *Living and Moving in Meaning*

Human life takes form in the way that the human being lives in the world, in the way that it inhabits the world. This is a basic assertion in Dalferth’s philosophy of religious orientation. Dalferth shows the merit of approaching religion as it pertains to one’s life-world. This approach is an attempt to understand the world as that which forms the human life, and hence, as a way of thinking the world from the world-relation. The world-relation is our world-inhabitation as determined through our semantic engagement. We are always moving in domains insofar as we relate to our world and the way we employ our as-structured determinations in the spatial and social environment that accommodates our continuous self-formation. The problem with a notion of the world as itself a possible determination, is that one overlooks in what sense the world is what enables determination. In regard to the domain-ontological perspective we can say one overlooks the semantic domains in use when constructing a theory of the world.

Nagel, McDowell, and Taylor all carry a Kantian heritage (that is more or less nurtured by an analytical tradition). Among many other insights, Kantian idealism reveals that *when* we understand, and when something is intelligible and meaningful for us, *we think*. This means that we think in terms of employing semantic structures in our positing of the world. What comes into view does so as part of a world, as worldly. As Gabriel says, transcendental ontology cannot be content with ‘*Having the World in View*.’ Kant provides a critical investigation of our rational capacities that enables us to step back, in order to have our ‘having the world in view’ in view.⁴⁶⁸ The world is always only in view to the extent that it is in our view. We can

⁴⁶⁶ “Das ontologische Argument hilft daher, einen Aspekt der Grammatik des Gottesgedankens zu verstehen, es vermag aber nicht die Wirklichkeit des Gedankens eines absolut Wirklichen zu sichern. Entgegen seiner Bezeichnung ist seine Funktion hermeneutisch-erläuternd, nicht ontologisch-begründend.” Dalferth, *Die Wirklichkeit des Möglichen*, 148.

⁴⁶⁷ Dalferth, “Leben angesichts des Unverfügbaren. Die duale Struktur religiöser Lebensorientierung,” 266.

⁴⁶⁸ Gabriel, *Transcendental Ontology*, xxii.

explore retrospectively, but only under the circumstance of employing yet another presupposition.

The human world-relation expressed in the question of the world entails a metaphysical challenge in which one seeks to think a unity that includes itself. In Schelling's over-all program, he approaches this as a *unity of unity and difference*. The metaphysical challenge lies not in the question itself (they never do), but in the way we expect it to be answered. Schelling's Kantian agenda asserts that the world is not something we think but something at work when we think. Any theory that seeks to make universal claims makes itself blind to the presupposition that is at work in such claims. Ultimately, we cannot have the world as an object. We only relate to the world in the way we relate to determinate objects, or anything determinable as such.

The question concerning the world and our relation to it is therefore a question even before we ask it. The world is at issue in every sense we have and in every sense we make. Any attempt to articulate an ultimate answer fails because it asks for something it can never have nor be without, because it concerns the very condition that places us in an intelligible world. In the question of the world we speak out our dependency on meaningful structures, on structures of orientation.

Dalferth helps to make the human encounter with the incomprehensible clear. Schelling offers various expressions, most clearly providing an over-all ontology that explains the reality of the irrational, the indeterminable, and the unprethinkable. Dalferth provides an understanding of religion that concerns the semantic conditions of human life. In the face of the incomprehensible, the uncontrollable, and the indeterminable, we can doubt what sense to make of things, and find ourselves disorientated and dislocated. However, as Dalferth argues, the basic task is to orientate oneself according to the condition that the indeterminable and the incomprehensible are inevitable.

As my last point, I want to show that Schelling, with the domain-ontology offered by Gabriel, can contribute to a further appropriation of Dalferth's understanding of religious orientation by transcendence. I am here thinking particularly of the principle that Gabriel formulates as the inherent excess of every domain beyond itself as the *need for another domain*. The inherent excess in every domain is required for the benefit of illuminating its own structure. In principle, domains relate through their incompatibility and their organization (order) in different arrangements. However, domains are always limited and only work as limited. Likewise, meaning is never complete. The breakdown, or the limitation of a domain always requires the excess that leads to another domain. As there is no way of stepping outside of domains, the limits of our domains is an encounter

with the meaningless and incomprehensible. Any relation of domains or illumination of domain-structures requires another (higher-order) domain.

This idea of an inherent ‘need for another domain’ in every domain pertains to the concept of transcendence that Dalferth suggests regarding life-orientation. Luhmannian ‘re-entry,’ which was the background for Dalferth’s application of transcendence, prepares Dalferth’s thought for making this comparison. In life-orientation, the symbolic systems of a religion give expression to *transcendence* as an articulation of that which combines the comprehensible with the incomprehensible. For the possibility of maintaining one’s life in semantic and existential coherence in the face of the incomprehensible, another domain is always needed. Symbolic structures are orders of the world, the cosmos, that one has available for orientation. In symbolic structures human beings interpret themselves in ‘other domains’. When one’s world breaks down, or is threatened by the incomprehensible, one seeks to cope with this from another domain for the sake of maintaining meaning.

The religious articulation of transcendence can be illuminated with the idea of a need for another domain as the procedure for providing a combination of the comprehensible and the incomprehensible. While we can articulate this with regard to an existential matter, as is the focus in Dalferth, we can also identify this same movement on every other level of meaning. The movement beyond the domain we seek to articulate is the movement of transcendence. Transcendence is, in that sense, not static, but kinetic, in the form of the meaning-making and meaning-maintaining movement.

The application of the domain-ontology illuminates Dalferth’s approach to religious transcendence. The principle of the ‘need for another domain’ explicates the kinetics of transcendence present in all meaning, as the way we live and move in meaning. It shows in what sense domains are finite, or insufficient, when life is confronted with the indeterminable (that for which one has no domain). Therefore, this is not absolute transcendence but a transcendence that pertains to our finite being and the conditions of human finitude: the need for another domain is always present. Religious orientation offers a way of dealing with our finitude in articulating and giving expression to that which is beyond human understanding and control.⁴⁶⁹ Religion provides coherence beyond the limits of the human being. Religion is not itself the meaning of life or the meaning achieved in human living. Religion is a method for maintaining meaning. In this aspect of religion, every criticism of religion can be said to fall back on the *human*

⁴⁶⁹ Ingolf Dalferth, “Beyond Understanding?,” in *Subjectivity and Transcendence*, ed. Arne Grøn, Søren Overgaard, and Iben Damgaard (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 51–53.

being who is religious as a critique of the meaning and self-interpretation that the religious human being seeks in religion. Religion, in this sense, provides an image of what it means to be a finite human being. Religion, as a matter of human conditions, provides a self-consciousness to the human being, a way of interpreting oneself as a finite being.

The world of orientation is therefore a world that can respond to the otherness, the indeterminacy, and the uncontrollability that reflects human limits, the limits of human life. Religion reveals the fundamental conditions of human finitude as it reflects our dependence on semantic stability. In religion, we can explore the self-interpretation of human life and the world that shapes this life. Religion is self-interpretation insofar as it provides the domain of human existence with 'another domain.' Religious transcendence provides the illumination required for human self-understanding because no self-transparency is possible.

Personhood, as formulated by Schelling, designates human life on the conditions of the impossibility of self-transparency. We seek it in the notion of the world, but find that we are embedded in the world in a way that makes the world itself unavailable. In absolute orientation, the person comports itself to its condition and to the consciousness of its finitude. This is how personhood is a candidate for the philosophical reflection of the religious human being as well as the process and components entailed in coping with one's human conditions in the form of religion.

9.3 Recapitulation

The question of the world has been the guiding question of the discussions of this study. The discussion pertaining to this question has served as a method with which to illuminate the implication of a world-relation in the form of embeddedness. The embeddedness of the self is at issue in the fundamental pursuit of human self-understanding that brings the question of the world to the fore.

The reconstruction of Schelling's notion of personhood had the specific aim of elucidating the possibility of thinking the world from the world-reality, the embeddedness, which was initially explored as first-person cosmology. Schelling's ontology of freedom shows why it is that the conditions for speaking about the world will always overshadow the ambition to grasp all there is. The ambition of approaching the world in the form of a cosmological model misses the point of the embeddedness at play in the question of the world. The world can therefore always only be the world we have, the world as it comes into view, the world we inhabit. Schelling's central point is that we inhabit the world as we are and with regard to our concern with, and awareness about, who we are. We are heteronomous and finite beings who cannot overcome the conditions of our embeddedness in being. For Schelling, this means that we order and

organize ourselves in the world according to these conditions, that is, *as persons*.

The ontology of freedom develops through Schelling's critique of the logical immanence of being that is implied in the logical concept of being. Judgment is the turning point and it is in the formulation of a new concept of judgment that Schelling develops a historical and contingent concept of being. The ontology of predication serves to explain how all being, as determinate being, takes form from an indeterminate and unprethinkable state of facticity and becomes part of a world in the form of an indeterminable presupposition that reason employs in every moment of thinking. Thinking is therefore always a step behind in order to illuminate its own presupposition. This puts the human being in a situation of orientation.

Embeddeness in being is a position in being, a situatedness with which the human being always finds itself bound to concrete situations that require orientation. Fundamentally, position, as the condition of our predicative activity, makes all determinations – and therefore being itself – contingent. The meaningful life that takes form in contingent being is unfolded in the course of history as the world of human beings and the relation to determinate, contingent being, a relation that is fundamentally historical. The world, therefore, rests on the person and the conditions of a personal being. Personhood is the ontological situation in which the world comes into view.

Schelling's emphasis on the heteronomy of human life as the basis for the formation of personhood entails a constitutive interpersonal aspect as formulated in the 'person seeking person' dictum. As I have tried to show with Dalferth's notion of absolute orientation, the self-understanding of oneself as a person ultimately rests on another person in whose eyes one becomes a person to oneself. This is not irrelevant to the world. It is part of the situation in which the world comes into view. This is what Schelling means in writing: "the person of God, is the general law, and everything that happens, happens by virtue of the personality of God."⁴⁷⁰

Dalferth's philosophy of orientation offers a phenomenological formulation of the first-person cosmology as the basis of an understanding of religion. Orientation is a setting that depicts the human world-relation. In Dalferth's exposition of the world of orientation, the first-person cosmology is construed in the features of ordering and locating. However, there is also a decisive aspect of Dalferth's thinking that improves the understanding of religion defended by Nagel. The world of orientation requires orientation because we experience a semantic deficit regarding incomprehensible and indeterminate phenomena. Proper orientation

⁴⁷⁰ Schelling, *On Human Freedom*, 60.

provides the means for dealing with these phenomena, which, in Dalferth's application of Luhmann, means combining and attaching them to the meaning we have in order to maintain our life-orientation.

Dalferth's phenomenological approach proved helpful with regard to the first-person cosmology. Meaningful phenomena are not entities within a determinate world; they are *worldly*. This adjectival aspect corresponds to an active aspect, as an active ordering, a cosmologizing. The idea of the adjectival understanding of the world therefore corresponds with Schelling's ontology of predication. The links drawn between Schelling and Dalferth were further supported by Gabriel's formalization of Schelling in the form of the domain-ontology. In particular, this was informative for the interpretation of transcendence as it pertains to religious orientation and as it was explicated in the idea of the inherent 'need for another domain.'

What has been established is therefore an understanding of how religion is a concern with the world. It is understood in this way in light of the fact that it is a deeply human concern. Taylor's notion of background frameworks is informative for understanding the idea of orientation and for understanding in what sense conditions of orientation are human. Schelling's notion of personhood can be seen as a forerunner for Taylor's notion of framework insofar as it shows that the world comes into view on human terms only. This is world-inhabitation.

9.4 Conclusions

This study has concerned the conditions of the human being for seeking an understanding of the world. This has been approached in the form of a question of the world. From the outset, the question of the world was explored in relation to religion under the assumption that religion gives expression to a problem of relating to the world. Nagel's notion of the religious temper as a disposition to ask the cosmic question confirmed this aspect. The question, however, further entails the aspect of an initial, underlying engagement with the world as the basis for the question and its expression as a problem. The discussion of possible answers to the cosmic question in the form of a first-person cosmology confirmed that the world-relation must be understood in terms of embeddedness: the world in question is *always* someone's world.

As part of the world, the human being comes to question this participation, which is the basis of the question of the world. The question that pertains to religion is how religion is concerned with an understanding of the world. In this regard, my claim has been that 1) *Religion is concerned with the world from a state of engagement and embeddedness of human life in the world.* In Dalferth's approach to religion, the human embeddedness in the world is treated as a phenomenological and existential

matter of orientation. The insight into embeddedness as a condition of orientation derives from the plurality of orders of orientation. Orientation is therefore always an engagement with the question of the world. It seeks to provide a proper and meaningful basis for living a human life. In this sense, orientation pertains to the scope of human life, which is the condition I designate as world-inhabitation.

In order to address this understanding of religion, we took up the discussion concerning the world-relation and how embeddedness can be understood. In the question itself (*the cosmic question* as the question of the world), the human being is determined as a questioning, that is, engaged being. This was pursued with the claim that 2) *The embeddedness of human life in the world binds the question of the world to an understanding of subjectivity and the human self*. Selfhood is what enables the human being to see itself as embedded in the world, and, as such, in need for orientation. The question of the world reflects that the human being seeks determination about its relation to the world. This is already implied when we speak of the human being as a self. Consequently, there is a double aspect of the world-relation. There is a basis for understanding the human being in a split, a detachment of consciousness, in which the self determines what is set apart from the world. This split is the fundamental possibility of the question of the world. However, the questioning itself reflects more than a split of consciousness. It reflects a fundamental *concern* with the world, in which it shows that the relation to the world is not indifferent or unimportant. And yet the world remains indeterminable. The self is therefore embedded in the world in a certain way, namely, as a subject. In this sense, subjectivity means that the world comes into view from within the world, from a perspective, and correspondingly only in the worldliness of the determinate phenomena.

Schelling's notion of personhood added a more radical notion of embeddedness, one that takes an anthropological stance beyond a theoretical conception of subjectivity. This was further supported by Dalferth's elaboration on orientation as it pertains to the aspect of a human life-world. There is a way in which Schelling's notion of personhood can be read as moving towards the implications of the life-world, but it is important to understand that Schelling develops this notion as part of an ontological program. This program was explicated through the components of *proposition*, *position* and *personhood*.

I have further claimed that 3) Schelling's notion of personhood provides a theory of the embeddedness of human life in the world that reflects the semantic conditions of world-orientation. In the course of the discussion on various models of the self-world relation, the central issue was the sense in which the world-relation was formative of the world. This introduced the question of meaning as a question underlying the world. Meaning is not

only the issue in an attempt to understand the world, but also in any attempt to understand at all. The world becomes a question of how things make sense to us, and of the conditions of possibility for the sense we can possibly make.

In Schelling, the question of sense is incorporated into the human experience of finitude. The notion of finite reason marks the conditions of subjectivity in Schelling's later thought. The person is placed in the facticity and concreteness of a historical life. The person is an agent. In a sense, this proves more radical than practical philosophy. Taylor's notion of moral ontologies reflects similar aspects in which fundamental questions of qualitative distinction determines a fundamental orientation and inhabitation of one's world. In Schelling, the assertion is that the person is an agent with regard to meaning and to the fundamental endeavor of making sense in its way of inhabiting the world and orienting itself in the world.

The basis for a personal self-understanding and further self-formation is an orientation in a world that does not provide secure ground. The person is engaged in the world as an agent that needs to disclose the world for its being as an agent. In this matter, Dalferth's notion of orientation is central. The turn to Dalferth, however, is not only a return to the initial question of religion as a concern with the world. Dalferth's exposition on the world of orientation offers a phenomenological appropriation of thoughts that are central to Schelling. Orientation provides an understanding of human life on the conditions of the contingency of the world. The central distinction of *order* and *location* describes how the human being orients in the world, its world-inhabitation. Religion provides a basis for understanding this human world-inhabitation. Furthermore, religious orientation establishes the possibility, as a rational human being, of maintaining the meaningful structures of one's living in the face of the meaningless and the indeterminable. Both Schelling and Dalferth deal with these limits in terms of indeterminacy, as a fundamental condition of a life that depends on meaning.

Orientation, as the way of inhabiting the world, has a fundamental collective aspect. There is, in the world-inhabitation itself, an aspect of the way we constitute our social being that anchors the question of the world in a collective perspective. The plurality of orders provides insight into the conditions of our orientation. My claim, in this regard, concerns the way in which Schelling's notion of personhood provides an anthropological characterization and structural composition for understanding what in religion, in terms of heteronomy, is self-forming. 4) *From the perspective that religion reflects world-inhabitation as a matter of world-orientation, Schelling's notion of personhood can be understood as absolute orientation.*

I do not claim a theory of religion in Schelling's notion of personhood. However, I do claim to have shown how this notion of personhood can be made available for contemporary philosophy of religion. I have shown a new direction for possible explications of Schelling's thought. Schelling's notion of *personhood* provides a way in which to understand the semantic conditions of world-orientation. This reflects how religion and selfhood can be understood as being tied together in a human need for transcendence in self-understanding. This kinetic transcendence is a procedure of understanding for a finite being.

Finally, a question of broader perspective should be raised, concerning whether Dalferth and Schelling can be criticized on the grounds of the way in which the world seems to be organized around human aspects of finitude. To what extent does human self-understanding come to expression? Can it fail? I think this is a question worth discussing in regard to the many contemporary agendas of our technological age that have a strong trans-humanistic belief in the 'flourishing' and 'enhancement' of human nature 'beyond human restraints.'⁴⁷¹ If we should radicalize the question then one could ask: to what extent can a denial of human finitude be an option for orientation? The way many people expect that technology can find ways to overcome diseases, pains, physical disabilities and ultimately our age, is striking. I think that a denial of finitude is itself a human aspect, in which the conditions themselves are to be overcome. To seek to overcome one's human conditions seems rather human. The common tenet of a trans-humanistic approach to human life, in which one seeks, by means of modern technology, to 'overcome' the human conditions, seems all too natural. Whether it is health issues or career planning, it seems to be far more common to strive for a longer, better, and richer life, one beyond some fundamental conditions and restraints. The belief in enhancement and the possibility that we can one day live without pain, without sickness, and maybe even without dying, contributes to a way of dealing with the fact that we suffer from a discomfort with the meaningless and incomprehensible aspects of human life. I believe our understanding of religion can teach us what kind of ambitions we put into our conceptions of the world, and how we seek to comport ourselves to them. Religion can teach how this is what we seek to achieve in our particular way of dealing with our finitude *as a way of dealing with it*.

I do not argue against science or scientific understandings of the world. That has not been my intention in this study. If anything, I have argued against the un-reflected conception that only science can reveal the reality to which the human being must comport. I have also argued that we cannot

⁴⁷¹ See for example Ronald Cole-Turner, ed., *Transhumanism and Transcendence* (Georgetown University Press, 2011).

make ultimate claims like the ones (too) often implied in a scientific orientation, or the belief that science alone will lead us to a greater or truer world than other forms of orientation. I do not think that any particular orientation can ever profit from ignorance to the plurality of orders and domains and the necessity of these orders. This insight should convince us that there is always a presupposition that has led us to where we are. To claim that people, e.g. people with a religious orientation (Muslims, Jews, Christians, etc.), are *biased* in their perception of the world (as opposed to not biased), which is often a point in public debates, is not a valid criticism insofar as every standpoint of criticism is itself a certain perception of the world. The important questions concern *how* we are 'biased' and whether we can live together despite such biases. As Slavoj Žižek has argued, this is the real danger of atheism: to believe oneself to be unbiased, and to believe oneself to see the world from a neutral standpoint.⁴⁷²

Taylor's notion of framework is one of the contemporary proposals for a way in which to think and to orientate in ethical, religious, and ideological matters from an insight into the fundamental condition that presuppositions are always in play in our meaningful social interactions in the world. Taylor advances this discussion with regard to asking the central question of how we can come to articulate our underlying presuppositions in order to make them available for consideration and discussion. In this he suggests the terms on which our standpoint, our perception of the world, can be articulated in a meaningful dialogue. In *Sources of the Self*, he shows that this articulation can be reflected in our historical development, which is how he approaches the question of the self and its sources in ancient and modern society. Our perception of the world is not something we choose to have on an intellectual basis as Nagel has suggested. The discussion of subjectivity and selfhood shows our preceding engagement with the world in a way that throws us back on the task of understanding the world we have, and how we have come to understand it in this way. A central value of Schelling is his engagement with the facticity of sense. We may ask 'why there is sense and not rather nonsense?' However, in Schelling's engagement with this question, the central point of the facticity of being is

⁴⁷² Žižek's treatment of criticisms of ideology is engaged with many illuminating topics from post-Kantian idealism. His reference to atheism concerns the idea that one is blind to one's own presuppositions by means of which the world has already taken form. "[T]he subject of course presupposes the 'world', the objectivity on which he performs his activity, as something given in advance, as a positive condition of his activity; but his positive empirical activity is possible only if he structures his perception of the world in advance in a way that opens the space for his intervention – in other words, only if he retroactively posits the very presuppositions of his activity, of his 'positing'." Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 2008), 247.

the unprethinkable miracle of the world and the life that we share is: that there *is* sense.

Summary

This study concerns the human conditions for seeking an understanding of the world. The overall thesis is that human self-understanding depends on an ability to relate to and orient oneself in the world, which is to say that *the human being conceives itself through the way it inhabits the world*. This thesis pertains to an understanding of religion as a way of orienting oneself in the world. Understood in this way, religion not only reflects the human disposition to seek an understanding of the world, but also reflects a way of inhabiting the world on human conditions. Thus, religious orientation reflects the semantic conditions of human life in the way self-understanding is mediated by the meaningful structures of the world.

The thesis emerges within a hermeneutic-existential framework. This framework determines the central exposition of the anthropological thought of the German philosopher F.W.J. Schelling (1775-1854) as portrayed in his notion of personhood. It is my ambition to show how this notion of personhood reflects the embeddedness of human life in the world and to make this available for a contemporary philosophical discussion of religion. This is done by first clarifying, with contemporary thinking, how religion can be understood as a concern with the world and how this concern binds religion to the question of human selfhood. The methodological movement of this study consists in an examination of Schelling in light of the findings of preliminary discussions on contemporary standpoints (Nagel, McDowell and Taylor), facilitating a return to a discussion of Schelling's potential for contemporary reflections on religion (Dalferth).

In Part I, I discuss Thomas Nagel's formulation of '*the cosmic question*' as an expression of human religiosity. The discussion of possible answers to the cosmic question and its implications for the self-world relation moves on to an assessment and discussion of John McDowell's *naturalism of second nature* and Charles Taylor's notion of *background frameworks*. I argue that the cosmic question cannot be sufficiently answered by ontologies such as naturalism because these undermine the status of the cosmic question as an existential concern. I further argue that any theory of the world that is ignorant of the embeddedness of the self that is revealed in the cosmic question falls short of providing a satisfying answer. On the basis of human subjectivity, our embeddedness gets in the way of determining our world as 'all there is.'

Against this backdrop, I initiate, in Part II, the reading of Schelling's notion of personhood. With this notion Schelling designates the human embeddedness in being as an *ontological situation* that is determining for the formation of the world and its semantic conditions. I show in what sense the human being, embedded in being, is understood as a finite and heteronomous being. The human being is a person, which, in light of its

finitude and heteronomy, must form its life on the basis of the contingency of the world. The central contribution of this study is the application of Schelling's notion of personhood to the problems characterizing the question of the world and its application to the notion of orientation. Schelling portrays embeddedness as a radical condition of contingency. From the perspective of personhood, a modern setting can be seen, one that makes clear what it means that no ultimate, objective reference is given for an understanding of the world, and that all references lead back to their ground in personal being.

Understood in this way, Schelling's notion of personhood provides a basis for understanding the intersection of religion and selfhood in religious orientation. In order to explore this, I consult, in Part III, the notion of religion provided by the German philosopher of religion Ingolf Dalferth. In religion, orientation is established by interpretations of living in the world by means of orders (*cosmologizing*), which enable a localization of the human being. Against the background of Dalferth's notion of orientation, the final discussion seeks to unfold the potentials of Schelling's notion of personhood in the context of Dalferth's notion of religious orientation. In this regard, I seek to demonstrate how religion discloses what it means to pursue a meaningful life according to the conditions of human embeddedness in a contingent world. In particular, I seek to demonstrate that this is the case in Dalferth's notion of *absolute orientation*.

In conclusion I argue that religion is concerned with the world from a state of engagement and embeddedness of human life in the world. The embeddedness of human life in the world binds the question of the world to an understanding of subjectivity and the self. Schelling's notion of *personhood* provides a theory of the embeddedness of human life in the world that reflects the semantic conditions of world-orientation. This is what makes Schelling available for Dalferth's notion of religious orientation. From the perspective that religion reflects the human world-inhabitation as a matter of world-orientation, Schelling's notion of personhood can be understood as *absolute orientation*.

Resumé

Denne afhandling handler om de menneskelige betingelser for at forsøge at forstå verden. Den overordnede tese er, at den menneskelige selvforståelse afhænger af muligheden for at relatere og orientere sig i verden, hvilket vil sige, at mennesket begriber sig selv gennem den måde, hvorpå det er i verden. Denne tese svarer til en forståelse af religion som en måde, hvorpå mennesket orienterer sig i verden. Forstået på denne måde, afspejler religion ikke bare den menneskelige trang til at forstå verden, men yderligere menneskets væren i verden på menneskelige betingelser. Den religiøse orientering afspejler de semantiske betingelser for menneskets liv i det at selvforståelse er medieret af de verdens meningsfulde strukturer.

Afhandlingen udfolder sig på et hermeneutisk-eksistentielt grundlag. Dette grundlag er afgørende for den centrale fremstilling af den tyske tænker F.W.J. Schellings (1775-1854) antropologiske tænkning, som det er kommet til udtryk gennem hans person-begreb. Det er min ambition at vise, hvordan dette person-begreb afspejler indlejringen af det menneskelige liv i verden, og at gøre dette tilgængeligt for en nutidig religionsfilosofi. Jeg gør dette ved først at klargøre, på et nutidigt filosofisk grundlag, hvordan religion kan forstås at handle om verden, og hvordan dette binder religion til spørgsmålet om selvet. Den metodiske bevægelse i afhandlingen består i en behandling af Schelling i lyset af en forudgående diskussion af nutidige positioner (Nagel, McDowell and Taylor), som forbereder diskussionen af Schellings potentiale for nutidig religionsfilosofi (Dalferth).

I Del I diskuterer jeg Thomas Nagels formulering af 'det kosmiske spørgsmål' som et udtryk for menneskelig religiøsitet. Diskussionen af mulige besvarelser af det kosmiske spørgsmål og dets implikationer for forholdet mellem selvet og verden, går videre til en vurdering og diskussion af John McDowells *liberale naturalisme* og Charles Taylors begreb om *baggrund*. Jeg hævder, at det kosmiske spørgsmål ikke kan besvares adækvat af naturalistiske ontologier, fordi disse underminerer betydningen af det kosmiske spørgsmål som et eksistentielt anliggende. Jeg hævder ydermere, at enhver teori om verden som ikke forholder sig til selvets indlejring i verden – som viser sig i det kosmiske spørgsmål – kommer til kort i sin besvarelse. På baggrund af den menneskelige subjektivitet stiller vores indlejring i verden sig i vejen for en bestemmelse af 'alt hvad der er.'

På baggrund af dette indleder jeg i Del II læsningen af Schellings person-begreb. Schelling betegner med dette begreb menneskets indlejring i væren som en *ontologisk situation*, som er bestemmende for udformningen af verden og dens semantiske betingelser. Jeg viser, i

hvilken betydning mennesket, som indlejret i væren, forstås som et endeligt og heteronomt væsen. Mennesket er en person, som i lyset af sin egen endelighed og heteronomi, former sit liv på basis af verdens kontingens. Afhandlingens centrale bidrag er en applicering af Schellings person-begreb på de forhold, der karakteriserer spørgsmålet om verden og dets applicering på orienterings-begrebet. Schelling fremstiller indlejring som en radikal kontingens-betingelse. Set ud fra person-begrebet, viser der sig et moderne forhold, som gør klart, hvad det betyder, at der ikke er noget ultimativt, objektivt holdepunkt i forståelsen af verden og at alle henvisninger viser tilbage til deres grund i personlig væren.

Forstået på denne måde, skaber Schellings person-begreb et grundlag for at forstå sammenstillingen af religion og selvet i religiøs orientering. For at undersøge dette, konsulterer jeg i Del III den tyske religionsfilosof Ingolf Dalferths religionsbegreb. I religion etableres orientering gennem fortolkninger af livet i verden ved hjælp af ordninger (kosmologiseringer), som for mennesket muliggør en lokalisering. På baggrund af Dalferths orienteringsbegreb, søger den sidste drøftelse at udfolde potentialerne i Schellings forestilling om individualitet i forbindelse med Dalferths begreb om religiøs orientering. I den forbindelse forsøger jeg at vise, hvordan religion beskriver, hvad det vil sige at føre et meningsfuldt liv i henhold til betingelserne for den menneskelige indlejring i en kontingent verden. Især forsøger jeg at vise, at dette er tilfældet i Dalferths forestilling om *absolut orientering*.

Afslutningsvis hævder jeg, at religion handler om verden på baggrund af menneskelivets deltagelse og indlejring i verden. Denne indlejring af menneskets liv i verden binder spørgsmålet om verden til en forståelse af subjektivitet og selvet. Schellings person-begreb tilbyder en teori om menneskets indlejring i verden, der afspejler de semantiske betingelser for verdens-orientering. Det er det, der gør Schelling tilgængelig for Dalferths forestilling om religiøs orientering. Fra det perspektiv, at religion afspejler den menneskelige væren i verden som et spørgsmål om verdens-orientering, kan Schellings person-begreb forstås som *absolut orientering*.

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